





**A BOOK OF FAMOUS SHIPS**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SONGS AND CHANTIES

SAILOR TOWN DAYS

SEA SONGS AND BALLADS





SALTHOUSE DOCK, LIVERPOOL

# A BOOK OF FAMOUS SHIPS

BY  
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WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
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# A BOOK OF FAMOUS SHIPS

## CHAPTER I

### THE SHIP AND HER STORY

THE task of the nautical historian—as distinct from that of the chronicler of strictly naval records—is one fraught with many difficulties and pitfalls, peculiar, perhaps, to itself. The story of the Royal Navy, the biographies of its individual ships and their commanders, the tale of their voyages and exploits, their personnel and equipment, are preserved in the archives of the nation. To unearth them from masses of dusty and crabbed documents, from mountains of files and tiers of boxes, may indeed be something of an undertaking. But the material is there for the industrious and patient seeker.

Of the great merchant ships of the past, on the other hand, those words may be used with a singular aptness whose association, in their original application, is far other. Their histories, if not their names, are “writ in water.”

Of all their long voyagings, fortunate and unfortunate, of all their gales weathered, their buffetings endured; all their escapes from ice, from fog, from strandings, from hurricanes, from typhoons, from collisions, from a hundred sea perils great and small:

of all these things it is the exception if something like a coherent narrative can be put together from the pages of bygone shipping registers, from stray paragraphs sought out with infinite pains from the newspapers of the day, from old log-books written in faded ink, from old letters, photographs, and models, and from the yarns of a generation of seamen now fast passing away.

So far as printed and written records of the famous ships of the Mercantile Marine are concerned, these fall into two classes—the official and the private. Lloyd's Register and certain of the shipping companies preserve the dry bones of their history: their successive changes of flag, of name, of ownership. "The rest is silence," so far as official records go. Has the sea claimed her own? Has the breaker's yard been her portion? Does she still exist, old, leaky, incredibly unseaworthy, on some remote coast where the Register takes no further account of her? A further patient search may or may not provide the answer.

As to the information in the possession of the shipping companies, here, again, there is in the majority of cases but little to be gleaned beyond the barest of statistics. Very few of the existing shipping concerns—the Orient, Shaw Savill, Aberdeen White Star, and New Zealand Lines are among the very few—are the direct successors of the old sailing shipowners. The firm of Green of Blackwall still retains a part of the old premises whence went forth, through a long sequence of years, so many of the finest ships Britain ever owned. But such instances are few and far between. Most of the old sailing ship firms—often one-man concerns, as in the cases of Captain John Willis and Duncan Dunbar—died out entirely, and their places were taken by new ones, generally limited companies, with

neither knowledge of, nor care for, the great traditions of their predecessors and the ships which had been their pride. The Black Ball Line is no more than a name and a legend. John Willis's fleet passed away with (indeed before) his death. Joseph Somes has left his monument in old Stepney Church, and the memory of some fine East Indiamen and China clippers. Carmichael's fleet is gone, as completely as that Argo from the story of whose voyage the names of those lovely ships were taken—"Jason," "Argonaut," "Golden Fleece," and the rest. Gone, too, are Marshall's ships; and Corry's "Irish Stars," of which so scant a record remains. Gone the fleets of David Nicol, of Devitt and Moore, of Wigram and Smith and Skinner.

Old premises have been pulled down, and the builders' models, the designers' plans, the log-books, the ships' papers, which would have been so invaluable to the nautical historian of the present day, were scattered to the winds. It was not thought, perhaps, that they would ever be wanted. The particulars of the "Cutty Sark" were, I believe, carted away as waste paper when her designer died some few years ago. And so is history lost!

Written records of a private sort are more hard to come by still. Some ships have been singularly fortunate in having associated with them men who were possessed both of the gift and the inclination to make and keep records of their doings: such vessels, for instance, as the "Torrens," the Blackwaller "Alfred," the old "Tweed," and the "La Hogue," described (though under an imaginary name) by the late Clark Russell in some of his sea stories.

But for the most part the men of the days of sail were not of the stamp to set down their memories in black and white. Even had they the power to write

of them, it seldom occurred to them to do so. The man of action, who can find satisfaction for the human need of self-expression through the medium of deeds, knows not the desire to do so in words. Some officers kept journals, or had a literary turn and wrote their autobiographies after they had returned from the sea, or sent interesting letters to their home folks which someone had the forethought to keep. But the man before the mast was usually unlettered, simple, poor. His doings were not particularly interesting to anyone but himself. He took it all as part of the day's work while it lasted. He yarned of the past when he grew old to his cronies, old shellbacks like himself. And the oft-told yarns of his lifetime went down with him into the silence of the grave.

I remember no single instance of the published autobiography of one of the famous clipper captains in the China tea trade, or the Colonial emigrant trade, or even in the Australian wool trade of the 'sixties and 'seventies. They had something else to do but write books. America has a highly coloured and rather bombastic autobiography of the redoubtable Captain Samuels of the "Dreadnought." What would we not give to-day for Bully Forbes's life told by himself—or for a first hand account of the great tea race between the "Challenger" and her American rival—or for the tale of the "Thermopylae's" early voyages as none but her captain could have told it? The existing accounts of "Lightning's" voyages are interesting enough; but they are the accounts of passengers, and in such cases it does not hold good that lookers-on see most of the game.

And so we come to the chief source of nautical history—oral tradition; and in that even the humblest "shellback" yarn—rambling, inconsequent,



full of exaggerations and inconsistencies—cannot be ignored.

Oral tradition, as every one knows, is sometimes exceedingly unreliable; but even then its unreliability is compensated for, in part at least, by the touch of reality it can impart to the dry bones of fact.

I remember once, near the field of Marston Moor, getting into conversation with a ploughman who talked still of that centuries-old battle as if it had been yesterday. His grandfather, he said, could remember when he was a little lad. . . . He had heard the old man speak of it many a time. . . . He could remember a man running into the house all bloody, and how the womenfolk washed his wounds and hid him from the soldiers who were pursuing him.

Now, historically, of course, his story was most patently and manifestly incorrect. He had jumped two or three generations. He was, if you like, a liar!

But, liar or no, that absurd story seemed to make the ancient battle more real than whole books of historical fact could have made it. A few centuries had got mislaid. What matter? The essential thing was that once, long ago, people living and working as people live to-day had seen the fugitives, "all bloody," streaming along the lanes, seen those men fighting, and dying, and lying in their blood, over whom the foxgloves still shed their purple autumn by endless autumn. . . . But this is an unpardonable digression, whose only excuse is that it goes to bear out the theory that oral tradition is an essential part of the realities of history. It is—it cannot but be—unreliable. It is in very many cases dependent on the memories of old, unlettered, ignorant men. It jumps over the centuries with a gallant unconcern. It disregards chronology. But—it lives!

It makes the men of the past into human beings—the ships of the past into fabrics man has known and served and loved. Yes, “loved”; for the love of the sailor for his ship is a thing as wonderful as it is unique.

I had almost written “was,” since I doubt whether any steamship, however fast, however magnificent, ever can arouse in the breast of the seafarer quite that feeling of enthusiastic affection, of glowing loyalty and pride, which the sailor cherished for the queens of sail.

I may conceivably be quite wrong; but at least I have never come across it in the case of a steamboat man. If it did exist it would perhaps be more likely to be found in the engine-room than on the bridge. The reason is not far to seek. There is not—there can never be—the same intimate personal relation between a mechanically driven vessel and her officers and crew as between a sail-propelled ship and her personnel. The sailing ship man knows his ship as a skilled rider knows his horse. He knows just when to humour her, to be stern with her, to drive her, to ease her, to spare her. She answers to every skilful disposition of her canvas, every movement of her helm, as a horse answers to the hand upon the bridle. She depends upon man; and it is the primary instinct of man to love that which depends upon him.

In the case of the steamship, seamanship (it need hardly be said) is in a sense as necessary as ever it was. But it is a different kind of seamanship. The man on deck, be he captain, mate, or seaman, no longer deals directly with the ship. His will is expressed through the engine—engines, moreover, of which in many cases he has but little technical knowledge and very often a secret dislike, if (as so many of our steamship officers still are) he is sail-trained.

“ ‘ Victory,’ ‘ Victory,’ how you distract my poor brain ! ” cried dying Nelson in the cockpit at Trafalgar, speaking with a tender chiding, as to a woman loved yet wayward. There spoke the true spirit of the ship lover—the same that is expressed in another way by any unlettered old shellback to whom his ship is “ the ol’ barkey,” “ the ol’ gal,” even—though quite affectionately—“ the ol’ bitch.”

That proverbial love of the sailor for his “ last ship ” is another characteristic peculiar to his calling. It is a thing perhaps only to be compared to a man’s affection for his old school or college. The sailor’s attitude is the precise opposite of

Man never is, but always “ to be ” blest.

He is persistently and sentimentally conservative. For him the old times, with all their faults, were always the best times. Never ships so fine as those he knew in the days of his youth. Never shipmates so well worth having. Never girls whose lips were so sweet—or beer that was so good—or ports that were so romantic. The very cockroaches which found their way into his duff—the very weevils he swallowed under cover of the kindly gloom of the fo’c’sle—are referred to with a tender and humorous indulgence once they are become a part of his wonderful past.

And here again the explanation is perhaps a perfectly simple one. For no one was the future less of a certainty than for the man whose business was in the great waters. But the past was his, to dream upon and to glory in, and to invest with a halo of splendour it never wore while it was still the mere unconsidered present. Then, indeed, he might grumble (as what seaman does not ?) with the vigour characteristic of

his trade. But once passed away from him it was different altogether.

All of which brings us back once more to the vexed question of the general unreliability of oral testimony, and to the special distrust which in the popular mind attaches to the yarns of ancient mariners.

It is beyond a doubt impossible to accept as fact the eulogies of every illiterate old salt concerning his old ships. It is not that he means to lie. In nine cases out of ten he honestly believes his own yarn, even to the point of practising physical violence on anyone who should venture to throw doubt on it ! He is, in the last resort, more a romantic than a romancer. For him his ship is become a wonder-ship, and you will find a man speaking with a tender reverence of some ordinary plodding trader as of the fastest and finest ship that ever floated. Hers is the beauty of his own lost youth, the light that never was on sea or land is about her visioned spars. She is all his unfulfilled desires, his broken dreams, his inarticulate yearnings made manifest. And the old eyes glow, the old voice trembles, at the thought of all the lost and lovely things of which that old ship is the sacrament and the symbol. To him it is all real, more real than any of the hard material realities of the present, the things a man can feel and see and touch. And if a ship has held the hearts and known the homage of men, that fact alone may be said to teach us something about her. For this faculty—of capturing men's love and loyalty—is one which is as unequally shared among ships as among women. To one seems to be given the power of gaining countless lovers ; to another, as handsome, as kindly—nay, more kindly—it falls to remain for ever unwooed and unwon.

And now for a few words on the never-answered

question, What was the fastest sailing ship ever built? At least four or five of the ships whose life-histories are told in the pages which follow have, with many others, been claimants to the honour, and all of them have claims which it is hard to dispute. There are the American packet ship "Dreadnought," the Black Ballers "Marco Polo," "Lightning," and "James Baines," the American tea clipper "Flying Cloud," the British tea clippers "Thermopylae," "Cutty Sark," "Ariel," "Sir Lancelot," and "Lothair." There is the "Lancing," that astonishing old converted steamship, which is still sailing the seas in what must be nearly her sixtieth year. There is the "Hallowe'en," which made such wonderful passages in the last years of the tea races. The "Decapolis" is, I believe, still another claimant; and there are many more which in the opinion of those who sailed in them, if of nobody else, are in the first flight for championship honours.

A correspondent of mine—an old sailorman broke in the service of the sea—used to write to me glowing accounts of the speed of his old ship in the Frisco grain fleet. I spoke of this wonder-ship one day to another sailor acquaintance, and, like Sir Patrick Spens, "sae loud, loud laughed he."

"Seventeen knots—I *don't* think! Why, that old ship never did more than fourteen since she left the ways! And if she could have done it, what's more, she'd never have had the chance, for old Captain D——, who had her for years, was part owner of her. You bet he wasn't going to risk chucking away his profits in losing canvas and spars just for the sake of making a good passage! There was precious little cracking on about him."

So that wonder-ship vanished into thin air—as



might, no doubt, on inquiry a good many of the less authenticated claimants to the position of "fastest ship in the world."

I read a volume of nautical reminiscences not long ago whose author claimed that his ship had sailed past most of the crack vessels of the day. She may have done, though I rather doubt it. The slowest and most ordinary of rivals become noted flyers as they vanish hull down below the horizon. And there may have been some reason why the famous ships she passed (if she did pass them) were not being driven.

The truth is that it is all but impossible to say of any ship with any certainty that she is the fastest ship in the world. So many things combine to make good or bad passages—the state of the vessel's bottom, the winds, the currents, the nature of her cargo and the way it is stowed, the capacity or otherwise of her officers. Many of the ships which carried passengers—especially people travelling for their health—or valuable live stock were seldom pushed to their utmost. The Black Ballers, on the contrary, were nearly always sailed very hard. The mail contract and the desire to get emigrants to their destination quickly were both factors which urged their commanders to make fast passages.

It was one of the Victorian conventions—indeed, it was a convention much earlier than that—to consider a sailor a liar. The fact is, that stay-at-homes generally find it difficult to believe the tales of the travelled. But it does not follow in the least that those tales are untrue. The majority of people are naturally inclined to doubt the authenticity of anything which does not come within their own perhaps very limited experience.

Many of the tales of Sir John Mandeville were

undeniable "cuffers." Others—which his own contemporaries found it the hardest to swallow—have been pronounced by scientific exploration to be established fact. Even Louis de Rougemont, that nine days' wonder of the nineties, has recently found his vindicators. I knew a man once, over on the Pacific coast, who won a world-wide reputation as a liar on the strength of one of his yarns. He *was* a liar, so perhaps to a certain extent it was the case of the boy who cried "Wolf!" over again. He used to express a deep sympathy, I remember, with the ingenious and similarly discredited Dr. Cook; and there was no reason whatever why this particular yarn should not have been true. More, there was really every reason why it should have been true.

It is in the long run upon the men who themselves served in the famous ships of the past that we must rely for their history. Other people may have seen them, in harbour or at sea. But none other has really *known* them.

And even so it is not all—indeed it is but few—who have the rare knack of communicating their experiences to others. Some sailormen are exceedingly reserved. Some are not at all good hands at spinning yarns, with the best will in the world to do so. Good raconteurs are by no means common on land; and although on the whole they are considerably more often to be met with among seafaring folk, it is not to be expected that all will be equally gifted in this respect. And the man who is thus gifted will sometimes go to the other extreme, and not only deluge you with a hundred and one irrelevant details, but, even, if he thinks his yarn is not highly coloured enough, throw you in a little fiction by way of compensation.

Another point, too, which adds to the difficulties



of collecting the histories of ships is the system of water-tight compartments into which ships and sailors are divided. A man who has spent all his life, say, trading to the East may know nothing at all, beyond the ordinary gossip of the ports, about other famous ships which were his actual contemporaries. London men, generally speaking, know very little of Liverpool ships. The Blackwaller knew little of the Black Baller, the tea clipper of the wool clipper. Before the 'seventies ships were built generally for some special trade and stuck to it steadily, and so, for the matter of that, did their officers and petty officers, unlike Foc's'le Jack, who has a habit of liking a change. And this was more particularly the case during the heyday of sail, before the white wings had been driven to beat about the ports of the world in search of such cargoes as yet remained to them.

And the difficulty goes even further. One of the most curious characteristics of the British Merchant Service was—and still is, for the matter of that—the jealousy, somewhat like that between different schools, existing between different lines, and even, sometimes, between different ships owned by the same line. The late Captain Crutchley, in his entertaining volume of reminiscences, calls to mind the presence of such a feeling as regarded the officers of the Union Castle, the P. and O., and the White Star Lines. And a similar rivalry (possibly more accentuated, since the feeling of esprit de corps in the various services was in those times proportionately stronger) existed between the lines of sailing vessels in the great days of "Stick and String." Green's ships, for instance, were considered to go in for what we should nowadays call "swank." Even such fine ships as the Aberdeen White Star clippers were not accounted in "the same

class " as the Blackwallers ; for there is no doubt that the Blackwall officer, and still more the Blackwall midshipman, were accustomed to reckon themselves more or less the salt of the sea, if not of the earth.

I was talking not long ago to an officer who had served his time in one of Green's ships, and he recalled that his ship once lay for several weeks in Melbourne Harbour alongside a famous clipper belonging to one of the Aberdeen firms. The two ships were moored so close that they almost touched. The officers on duty could have passed the time of day quite easily, had they been so minded. The Green's ship, occupying the inner berth, received nightly incursions of her neighbour's returning " drunks " as well as her own. They knew each other perfectly well by sight. But they never exchanged a syllable. " All a lot of silly rot, of course," added my informant, " but there it was ! "

Sometimes, it is true, they spoke each other at sea—nothing more. To no one more than to the seaman do the words ring so true :

Ships that pass in the night and speak one another in  
passing,

Only a word and a hail, then silence again and the dark-  
ness.

Longfellow is one of the very few poets with a real understanding of the sea. Born on the coast of Maine when American shipbuilding was at its zenith, the sea was in his blood, as it was in that of all Down-easters in his day, and he never lost his love of

The beauty and mystery of the ships  
And the magic of the sea.

Another element which the collector of nautical records must not forget to take into account is such

evidence as may be gleaned from old pictures and models—even the humble ship in a bottle, which is sometimes the only remaining contemporary likeness of a proud ship whose stout timbers or steel sides are long since gone to dust and rust. The pity is that so much of that evidence has been allowed to perish as unregarded lumber before the present-day interest in the sailing ship and her history gave to all such things—even to the most ordinary “sailor’s model,” even to those appallingly inartistic lithographs and engravings which the middle of the nineteenth century produced in vast numbers—a sort of fictitious collector’s value.

For there is undoubtedly to-day a very widespread interest taken in such things, not only by the genuine collector, but also by those odd beings who collect ship-models and prints and paintings (much as school-boys collect “blood-alleys”), by way of a change from Paisley shawls and snuffboxes and pewter teapots.

I heard not long since of one of these latter who had acquired (and paid for through the nose) a “genuine model” of an East Indiaman of John Company’s time.

“Yes, very nice!” said the expert to whom he displayed his treasure. “But what’s she doing with double topsails?”

“Double topsails?” (Poor man, he had probably never heard of such things!) “I don’t quite understand. . . .”

“Well, *those* are double topsails, and they didn’t come in till the eighteen-fifties!”

But, as a matter of fact, “faking” is not likely to be very general as regards model ships, for the simple reason that there are not many people nowadays who can make a rigged model, even of a modern ship, much

less successfully counterfeit the peculiarities of rig of a vanished era. As a rule, faked models are examples which have got—as so many do get—into a hopeless raffle aloft, and been re-rigged for the benefit of unwary collectors.

To me it is a source of bitter regret to think of the many famous and beautiful ships I might have seen with my own eyes, only a few years ago, and did not. We did not think, somehow, that they would so soon be gone. We thought that there would always be tall and stately ships in our harbours, always be lofty spires of sail to wed the transient beauty of man's handiwork to the eternal beauty of the sea.

I had a letter the other day from an old sailorman who called to mind that once, when he was going down to join his ship at Blackwall, he saw the announcement at the East India Dock entrance that the "Cutty Sark," "Samuel Plimsoll," and "Thomas Stephens" were due to sail on the same day. He never went to see them, and he had always regretted it. All that he remembered was the throng of tremendously tall masts seen over the top of the dock wall.

Well, the sea remains, and the ships are gone. Some of them are gone irretrievably into the darkness of oblivion, leaving no more than a name and a fading memory. But here are some few stories of those whose histories may still be preserved. They are incomplete, as they cannot but be, taken as they are from the bare bones of official fact, clothed with flesh from such scanty written and printed chronicles as are available, and breathed into life by the tales of the men who knew them. But incomplete as they are, possibly in some respects incorrect, it may be that they may help to preserve some small portion of the fast-fading memories of sail.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CLIPPER SHIP "LIGHTNING"

#### I

**T**HERE is a pair of nautical prints well known to collectors, depicting, the one a bluff, apple-cheeked, flat-bottomed East Indiaman of the old type—the Honourable East India Company's ship "Royal George"—at anchor off Gravesend. A regular roll-along-blow-along old girl she is, the sort that would get there all right if she took long enough about it, and always took in her topsails as soon as it came on to blow ; and underneath the picture is the legend, "The Old School, 1755—Eight Months to India."

The companion picture—"The New School, 1855—Sixty Days to Melbourne"—shows a vessel of a very different stamp—a long, slim-hulled clipper, built for speed, with towering masts topped by dainty skysail yards.

In point of fact, the ship whose portrait appears as the representative of the "New School" was destined never to make good the boast. Hers was the fate which, curiously enough, so often seems to await the ship which starts upon her career with an extra loud flourish of trumpets. She was the ill-starred "Schomberg," which on her maiden voyage ran on to a sandbank near Cape Otway, and incidentally "broke" her captain by doing so.

The motto "Sixty days to Melbourne," whose



promise the "Schomberg" never substantiated, was, in any case, not her own property. It had already been made good by her predecessor, the celebrated American built clipper ship "Lightning," whose name is still remembered, forty years after her destruction by fire in Geelong Harbour, as that of one of the fastest and finest ships that ever sailed the seas.

The "Lightning," though she was accounted a big ship in her day, would not seem at all large to modern ideas. She had a registered tonnage of slightly under 1,500 tons. Her length was roughly 250 feet and her beam 50. From deck to truck her mainmast measured 164 feet, and her mainyard was 90 feet in length, stunsail booms extending her spread of sail by another 65 feet. In her the "keen clean bows" of the clipper were seen to perfection. She was one of the sharpest ships ever built; and, with her thirteen thousand yards of canvas spread—leaving her "flying kites" out of account—she must have been a glorious sight; such a sight, alas! as the world will in all likelihood see no more.

She was built for the celebrated Black Ball Line of Liverpool, famed in song and story, and owned by Mr. James Baines, a very well-known character in shipping circles at a time when something of the romance of commerce still existed, before the era of big companies and colossal combines. She was one of four tall sisters—the others of the four, "James Baines," "Champion of the Seas," and "Donald Mackay" were almost her equals, but on the whole "Lightning" was the pick of the lot.

Donald Mackay of Boston, who designed and built her, was undoubtedly one of the finest shipbuilders the world has ever known. He never built a ship which was really a failure, though the "Great

Republic's "disappointing career is said to have hit him so hard that he never really got over it. He was a sort of Paul Jones among shipbuilders, for America was only his adopted country; and there used to be a curious yarn in Aberdeen to the effect that Donald Mackay was at one time an apprentice in Hall's Shipyard, and that he broke his indentures and departed, taking with him the plans of some of Hall's ships. How the story originated it is hard to say. Donald Mackay is by no means an uncommon name in the north of Scotland, and it is quite possible that Hall may have had a runaway apprentice so called, and that someone may have fancied he recognized him in the successful shipbuilder of Boston. On the other hand, there is, or was, of course, a shipbuilder Hall of Boston, with whom Donald Mackay may have put in some time during his "wander-year" in the American yards.

The truth of the matter is that Donald Mackay was a native of Shelburne, Nova Scotia, where he was born in 1810. He was wont to boast of his descent from a Highland chieftain of the same name who flourished in the thirteenth century, and this ancestor, presumably, it was who was represented in the figure-head of the "Donald Mackay." As a young man he betook himself to the States, and worked in the shipyards of Messrs. Webb, Brown, and Bell, and others, before he set up in business on his own account in Boston. Thus he was fully in touch with all the new developments in American shipbuilding which were then in progress.

Among the celebrated ships which emanated from the Donald Mackay yard may be mentioned, as well as the four splendid James Baines sisters, the California clippers "Flying Cloud" and "Sea Witch";



the "Chariot of Fame," chartered later by the White Star Line, which took out emigrants to New Zealand; the first "Empress of the Seas" and the second "Sovereign of the Seas"; the unlucky "Great Republic," and the old "Glory of the Seas."

"Lightning" left Boston for Liverpool on her maiden passage on February 18, 1854. Captain James Nicol Forbes, known to nautical tradition as "Bully" Forbes, went across to the States to bring her over, and with him as builder's representative sailed Captain Lauchlan Mackay, a "blue-nose" skipper of the most skilled and daring type, who made some fine passages in the "Sovereign of the Seas."

Her departure from Boston was a very decorous affair, unmarked by any of the customary speech-making and orgies of Medford rum. "Bully" Forbes seems to have put on his Sunday face for the occasion, and he created quite a favourable impression in Boston. "Her commander," says a Boston paper of the day, "being a pious man, was attended down the harbour by a select party of brethren and sisters of the church"—a delightful touch in view of the many irreverent allusions to the Deity in which the anecdotes of "Bully" Forbes abound.

And here, perhaps, a brief account of the "Lightning's" most famous commander may not come amiss. He only had the ship for one voyage, yet a dozen people have heard of him for one who has heard of his successor, Captain Enright, fully as daring and brilliant a seaman, and in many ways a man of far more sterling qualities. There was something about Captain Forbes which made a popular hero of him. He was showy, daring, a trifle theatrical, and he must have possessed, too, a considerable measure of that

mysterious and elusive quality known as "personal magnetism."

A native of Aberdeen, he was what used to be termed a "hawse-pipe" officer, and he had forced his way to the front in his profession in his early days with characteristic energy and bluff. And he was very lucky.

His first famous command was that amazing old ship the "Marco Polo." Some people have attributed her wonderfully fine passages to the Colonies to Forbes's seamanship and daring; but here again luck was his friend. There can be no doubt that the ugly square black lump of a Quebec timber drogher had an astonishing turn of speed, which was in its way almost uncanny.

Years after Forbes's restless and fiery heart was stilled for ever in his obscure grave in Smithdown Road Cemetery, a Liverpool ship was loading guano at the Chincha Islands, and with her there was the old "Marco Polo." She must then—it would be some time in the 'seventies—have been getting on to her last legs. But she could show her paces still. When she got under way she went tearing by at a terrific rate, and, said the Liverpool ship's captain, "That old ship can sail, and no mistake. Do you know, *she frightens me*, somehow!"

Popular tradition credited Forbes, quite incorrectly, with being the inventor or discoverer of the principle of Great Circle sailing advocated by Lieut. Maury of the United States Hydrographical Department; and he undoubtedly was one of the first to carry the theory into practice. He took a much more southerly route to Australia than anyone before him had done, and the procedure was kept up by his successors.

He had in a remarkable degree that peculiar sort of "sixth sense," which has belonged to most of the

noted ship-captains of the past and which in these days of wireless and other scientific aids to navigation is perhaps hardly needed. Various stories are told of Forbes which illustrate this quality. One such anecdote—given on the authority of a man who had sailed with him as quartermaster on several of his voyages—tells how when homeward bound on one occasion, and approaching the Scilly Isles (no land having been sighted for six weeks), he came on to the poop after dinner, glanced at the compass, and said, as if to himself, "I'll go inside them." Then he said to the man at the wheel, "Ease her off half a point," and to the officer of the watch, "Call me when you sight the Bishop."

Possibly he relied once too often on this sixth sense of his when he lost the new clipper "Schomberg." I cannot for my part accept the theory usually advanced that he to all intents and purposes allowed the ship to take the ground out of sheer ill-temper because she was not coming up to his expectations as a passage-maker. Any shipmaster knew then, as he knows now, the stigma attaching to a captain who has lost his ship, no matter how creditable the circumstances may be to himself. And Captain Forbes, whatever his failings, must have been endowed with a certain share of Scots' shrewdness to have climbed so high on the ladder of success as he did, although on the whole he had very little of the traditional caution of the Scot about him. He was more of the buccaneer and pirate stamp—a type which is, in another direction, just as characteristically Scottish, for the race which produced Donald Smiths and Colin Campbells also gave birth to its Rob Roys and Sir Andrew Bartons.

But the error of judgment which resulted in the stranding of the "Schomberg" must always remain

one of the puzzles of nautical history. The fact is pretty well established that Forbes was playing whist in the cabin at the time, and, like Sir Francis Drake on a more fortunate occasion, he finished his game, and came on deck too late to get the ship on the other tack before she ran on to the sandbank. The only explanation seems to be that he did not realize that the wind had dropped while he was below at his game, and believed that he had left himself plenty of time to go about. There is an old saying that "spades were trumps when Basing House was taken"; and whatever happened to be trumps in that last game of Captain Forbes's rubber, he must have remembered them to his life's end. To make a long story short, the much-vaunted "Schomberg" piled herself up on a sandbank, where she ultimately went to pieces together with Captain Forbes's reputation.

Whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad; and this seems to have been the process as regards poor Forbes. His success went to his head, as his extravagant speeches at the Liverpool banquets where he was the hero of the occasion go to show. He was one of those men who might well have prayed to be saved from his friends.

There is an amusing story of one occasion when "Bully" Forbes met his match in the person of a Liverpool bus driver.

He had signalled to the bus to stop, but—whether from accident or design—the driver took no notice of him.

This was, of course, too much for Forbes's hasty temper to stand, and he darted out into the road and planted himself right in front of the horses, so that the driver was obliged either to pull up or run him down.

"Do you know who I am?" he demanded indignantly. "I am Captain Forbes, of the 'Marco Polo.'"

"I don't care if you're Captain of 'Ell," quoth the bus driver; "you ain't Captain of this 'ere ship!" And with that he whipped up his horses without more ado, and the great man had to execute a nimble if undignified skip into safety.

After the loss of the "Schomberg," Forbes drifted out East, occasionally getting an inferior kind of command, and often having to take a mate's berth, a bitter pill, no doubt, for his imperious spirit.

He died in Liverpool when he was little more than fifty, and his tombstone in Smithdown Road Cemetery records the solitary fact that he was "master of the 'Marco Polo.'"

To return, however, to the "Lightning's" first voyage. She left Boston on February 18, 1854, followed a day later by the White Star clipper "Red Jacket," a Nova Scotian built ship which was also a wonderful passage-maker in the Colonies trade. She made a remarkable passage to Liverpool, among her performances being a day's run of four hundred and thirty-six miles, which is said to be the biggest ever recorded by a sailing ship, and arrived off the Rock Light on the fourth of March, less than fourteen days from land to land.

Her first Australian voyage gave both Forbes and his new ship every opportunity to prove their mettle; and it was probably on this occasion that the famous "Hell or Melbourne" incident occurred.

A passenger whose nerves were decidedly ragged as a result of Forbes's daring "cracking-on" timidly



approached the skipper and asked him where he thought such dare-devil tactics were going to take himself, his ship, and his passengers.

"To hell—or Melbourne in sixty days!" was Forbes's reply, and it has become a tradition of the Service.

So, at any rate, runs the yarn ; and it is one of the consolations of the maritime historian that the paucity of authentic records makes it very unlikely that anyone will arise and condemn as myths his cherished anecdotes. Let who will demonstrate that Alfred never burnt a cake in his life, or banish "Up, Guards, and at 'em" to the limbo which awaits discredited fables!—but that Bully Forbes really did say "hell or Melbourne" no man will ever be able to disprove.

It was on this voyage, also, that he was said to have kept his crew in order at the point of the revolver, and adopted the methods of the American clipper captains, padlocking his sheets and halyards as a precaution against interference on the part of the more timid members of the ship's company.

And here it should be said that there is a good deal to be argued on Forbes's—as indeed on the Yankee skippers'—side. Mutiny in those days was by no means uncommon, and a Liverpool pamphlet describing the outward passage of the Black Baller "Tudor" gives an account of some very uncomfortable moments through which the emigrants passed during the early days of the voyage. And homeward bound with a million ounces of gold dust on board, a captain was obliged to keep a tight hand on his crew.

Forbes certainly cracked on to some tune on the homeward run, for he left his foretopmast and a stunsail boom or two somewhere in the high latitudes below Cape Stiff.



However, he brought his ship into Liverpool safe and sound in sixty-four days—believed to be a record, though, as shall be presently stated, she seems to have run it fairly close towards the end of her career.

## II

Captain Forbes left the "Lightning" before her next voyage. There could be no greater contrast than that between him and the man who now took his place as commander of the famous clipper.

Captain Anthony Enright, who asked (and got) a salary of £1,000 from Mr. James Baines to take over the "Lightning," came to Liverpool fresh from a signal triumph as skipper of the Aberdeen built tea clipper "Chrysolite," one of the first British ships to enter the lists in competition with the conquering Yankee tea fleet. He had more than once received substantial recognition from the owners whose ships he commanded, but success had not turned his head, although he evidently did not make the mistake of undervaluing his services. For some reason—what I have not been able to learn—he was often known as "Yankee" Enright. He was not, I think, an American by birth or upbringing, but he had certainly sailed for many years in American ships, where he made the name of a smart shipmaster, and also possibly became acquainted with Donald Mackay, who in turn recommended him to the Black Ball Line.

He never betted on his ships, not even the conventional wager of a tall hat between brother skippers, which was remarkable at a time when such bets were almost universal among shipmasters. His photograph shows him as a resolute but kindly looking man,

handsome but rather severe, clean-shaven but for the customary "sideboards" familiar to students of the mid-Victorian album. He looks rather as if he might have made a good bishop; and indeed, when one comes to think of it, the mental if not the physical qualities required of a successful shipmaster are not very unlike those necessary for episcopal distinction.

A stickler for discipline, as those passengers learned who broke elementary rules as to lights and so forth, and had their grub stopped in consequence, he could unbend on occasion, for we read of his joining in a snow-ball fight in the high south latitudes when a heavy fall had covered the "Lightning's" decks. Dancing on the poop was also encouraged under his regime.

In one point Captain Enright kept up the Forbes tradition, for he stuck to his canvas through the Roaring Forties as much as, or even more than his dare-devil predecessor. He had not been in the China tea trade for nothing. I find only one occasion recorded when the "Lightning" was hove-to during her first six voyages.

All this was not so reckless as it may appear. The courageous way in the Forties is sometimes the safest way in the long run, and in all probability fully as many ships have been lost through timid counsels as through daring ones. The sailing ship commander might well take as his motto, like the old fairy-tale champion, "Be bold, be bold, be not too bold!" Heaving-to in bad weather is one of the most dangerous operations imaginable, especially in lofty ships like the Mackay cracks, which were very liable to be distasted by being brought up into the wind.

Moreover, the Australian clippers were built for cracking on. They were equipped in every particular

with the best and stoutest of gear. The strongest of spars, the staunchest of canvas, the most reliable of hemp, were not spared in their fitting out; and their comparatively high freeboard enabled them to run before seas which would have taken to the bottom one of the sailing ships of the 'eighties or 'nineties, with a deck cargo of lumber up to the fairleads, or loaded to the Plimsoll line with grain or nitrate. It is noteworthy that, for all the driving they got, the Black Ballers suffered very little damage aloft, though on her passage to Melbourne in 1856 the "Lightning" lost her spanker and foretopmast stunsail booms, and the loss of her foretopmast under "Bully" Forbes has already been mentioned.

The "Lightning's" record under Captain Enright was a particularly brilliant one, including one very remarkable day's work of 430 miles, this of course while running the easting down. Her voyages were varied by the usual interchange of comedy and tragedy. Once a drunken woman in the second cabin achieved a temporary if unenviable distinction by setting her bonnet on fire, for which she was promptly clapped into irons and committed to the "black hole." There were various cases of "man overboard," sometimes with a happy ending, as in the case of a passenger who, though unable to swim, kept himself afloat by means of a lifebuoy which had been thrown to him until a boat could be lowered to pick him up. Sometimes the outcome was less fortunate, as when a poor fellow fell from the jibboom when the ship was making twelve knots, and the way could not be got off her soon enough for the boat which was lowered to be of any avail. A remarkable escape was that of the carpenter, who was working on a stage over the side when he fell, but was able to pass his hatchet

over the foresheet and hold on until he could be hauled on board.

It was during her fourth voyage, and on the outward run, that she made the remarkable record of 2,188 miles in six days ; and on the homeward passage she had what was perhaps the narrowest escape of her whole career.

In 49 degrees south latitude, the weather being thick and misty, with a drizzling rain falling, the lookout saw breakers on the lee bow. The first thought in those waters was of ice, but the peril in this case proved to be rocks. The ship was promptly put about, only to find more land in uncomfortable proximity to windward. The wind in the meantime had dropped almost to nothing, and Captain Enright must have had some of the most anxious moments of his life before the ship came slowly round sufficiently to clear the danger.

In 1857 Captain Enright gave up the command of the " Lightning " to Captain Byrne, who took her out to India with troops at the time of the Mutiny. This was the only time during the whole of her career when the " Lightning " was missing from the Melbourne run.

Thereafter we get but occasional glimpses of her. In the 'sixties she passed to still another captain, Tom Robertson, who had some repute as a painter of ships and the sea, like Captain Clayton of the " Kent," Captain Holmes of the " Cimba," and Captain Whall of Green's ships. I find mention in the ship's magazine of the " Young Australia " for July 1, 1864, of a meeting at sea with the " Lightning " in south latitude 39.45.

" About half-past eight at night," the paragraph runs, " we came close in with a magnificent ship,

which proved to be the 'Lightning,' from London to Melbourne, 51 days out. This vessel belongs to the White Star Line, and is considered a very fast sailer, so that our having passed her is quite a feather in our cap."

The writer of course makes a curious mistake in describing the "Lightning" as under the White Star flag, and he is almost certainly wrong about her having sailed from London. There is no record of her ever having done so except when trooping.

The "Young Australia" was never amongst the first flight of the Black Ballers. Her usual run seems to have been between ninety and a hundred days, and she was getting on in years. So one might naturally conclude that the "Lightning," being now ten years old, was getting past her best.

But there was speed in the old ship yet. During the last four years of her life she made a passage which compares very favourably with those of her youthful exploits under Forbes and Enright, and is indeed one of the finest passages from Melbourne on record. I have not the exact date, but I give the story on the authority of a man who was in one of the ships concerned at the time.

The "Lightning" left Melbourne in company with the famous Aberdeen White Star clipper "Star of Peace" and the "George Thompson," of the same line, a wooden clipper built in 1865. The "Lightning" was burnt in 1869, so that it must have been between those two dates that the race took place. The three ships never saw each other again all the way home. But when the "George Thompson" was anchored in the Downs, waiting for her tug to take her up the river, another ship, already in tow, came in sight round the South Foreland.



It was the "Lightning." The "George Thompson's" skipper gave the word to heave up the anchor in a hurry, and hailed a tug. But the "Lightning" was just hauling into the Victoria Dock as the "George Thompson" passed her bound for London Docks. The "Star of Peace" arrived in the Downs the following day.

The passage was sixty-four days pilot to pilot, a wonderful record for all three ships. The "George Thompson" was a ship of 1,128 tons, and so far as I know was not famous as a flyer. The "Star of Peace" was a very noted ship in her day. She also, of course, belonged to the Aberdeen Line, and, like the "Jerusalem," made some very good passages.

### III

And now the great clipper's career drew to an end.

Hers were to be no weary years of alien bondage, hers no final defeat by the winds and the seas she had weathered so long and so bravely. Fate had reserved for her a nobler ending—the same which some old Viking might have chosen for the ship which had shared his wars and voyagings. More fortunate than her first owner and her first captain, she was not destined long to outlive the heyday of her success. She was her own funeral pyre—an end worthy of her career.

In October, 1869, she lay in Geelong Harbour taking on board a cargo of wool for the London sales. The wool, heating inwardly, as its habit sometimes is, broke into a flame during the night, and at half-past one in the morning, when the fire was detected, it had gained a good hold.



All through the day the great ship burned like a pyre. It was feared that she might involve the quay and possibly the town itself, then (like all new colonial cities) built of wood, in her own doom, but her moorings presently parted, and she drifted out into the harbour.

Heavy clouds of smoke shot through and through with flame rose from her hull. One by one her mighty masts and spars crashed over the side. Futile attempts were made to sink her by gunfire, but it takes more than a shot or two to sink a wooden ship partly loaded with a light cargo like wool. Witness the length of time that a timber-laden derelict will continue to float half-submerged, a menace to her kind, in the storms and buffetings of the North Sea or the Atlantic, and the way in which an old wooden ship, leaking like a sieve, will go on carrying cargoes for years to and from the ports of the Baltic.

By night she was still burning down to the water's edge, and all that remained was the mere shell of her hull and the charred stumps of her masts, with the silhouette of her fine bow and long jibboom standing out beautiful even in desolation.

So came to an end the mighty "Lightning," the subject of a thousand sailor-yarns, the heroine of many voyages. Her life was a short one—only a little over fifteen years from start to finish. But still in the imagination of man she goes plunging on her way through the Roaring Forties, her own special realm of achievement, with royals and stunsails set, the knots reeling out behind her; a sight no more to be seen while the seas endure—a Black Ball clipper running the easting down!

. . . . .

It is a curious coincidence—even taking into due account the great danger wooden ships always ran from fire—that so many of Donald Mackay's masterpieces should have come to an end through burning.

"Lightning's" sister ship "James Baines" was destroyed by fire in Huskisson Dock, Liverpool. "Donald Mackay," the longest-lived of the four, survived many years as a coal hulk at St. Vincent, Cape Verd Islands, only to meet a fiery doom at the finish. A nautical friend of the present writer saw her figure-head—a full-length representation of a Highlander in what had been the Mackay tartan—at Messrs. Cory's coal depôt at that place.

It is only quite recently that the last surviving example of all the swift and beautiful creations of Donald Mackay's shipbuilding genius has passed away—also by fire, though in this case the burning was not accidental. This was the famous clipper "Glory of the Seas," built in 1869, the year of the destruction of the "Lightning" and the launching of the "Cutty Sark." She was the last ship Mackay ever built, and though far from being one of his fastest—she was built when the sun of the soft-wood clippers had begun to set—she made some excellent passages in her day.

In her later days she became, like so many of the old stagers, a hulk, being used as a cold storage ship by the Glacier Fish Company, of Tacoma; and there she lay for a number of years, a familiar object to passing shipping, though probably few of those who saw her ever gave her a second glance. She looked little enough like the name which still stood out conspicuously on her stern, and added a touch of unconscious irony to her fallen greatness.

A patriotic American—inspired, possibly, by the example of Captain Dowman's purchase of "Cutty Sark"—conceived the idea of towing the old clipper round to the east coast and reconditioning her. But the plan proved impracticable. The old ship had been lying idle so long that the attempt to tow her round would only have resulted in sending her to the bottom. Her old timbers would never have stood the strain of a long tow. So the patriotic plan had to be abandoned, and a more practical, but sadly more material one, took its place. The poor old "Glory" wasn't even worth breaking up. Accordingly, she was hauled up on the beach at Seattle, and burned for the sake of the copper fastenings, which were the only things of commercial value left about her. And so passed away the last relic of a great shipbuilding tradition.

### CHAPTER III

## ACROSS THE WESTERN OCEAN : THE AMERICAN PACKET SHIP "DREAD- NOUGHT "

**P**ROBABLY more heads have been broken in the haunts of sailormen round the seven seas in argument concerning the fabled passage of the American packet ship "Dreadnought" than over any one subject in the wide world.

There is a certain anecdote which used to be very well known to the shellback of the old school, but which is now probably almost forgotten, illustrating the methods attributed to some of the American skippers in making their "record runs." And in order that it may be understood by those not acquainted with the process, a brief description of the old-fashioned method of "heaving the log" is perhaps necessary.

The "logship" formerly used in sailing vessels was a weighted piece of wood somewhat resembling a scone or a Scotch oatcake in shape, which was attached to a line divided by knots at regular intervals. One man took charge of the log while another stood ready with a sand-glass.

The log was then hove, and as soon as the white rag which showed where the calculation was to begin was over the ship's rail the man watching the line would cry "Turn"; the holder of the sand-glass would then reverse the glass until all the sand had run through.

When the sand had run out the man with the glass would call "Stop," and the number of knots on the line which had run out during the time—usually twenty-eight seconds—between the "Turn" and the "Stop" was the number of nautical miles which the ship was doing in an hour.

Hence the palpable incorrectness of the expression "so many knots an hour" which many people, and even many seafaring people, are in the habit of using. The "knot" is in no sense a measure of distance, nor is it a measure of time. It is simply a division on the log-line, which in its turn is so divided that its relation to the sand-glass time is that of a nautical mile to an hour. A knot is not a nautical mile any more than twenty-eight seconds is an hour; and there is no more sense in saying that a ship travels at the rate of so many knots an hour than in speaking of her as making so many miles per twenty-eight seconds.

To return, however, to our subject, namely, the anecdote in which Merchant Jack was wont to satirize somewhat crudely the record-breaking propensities of Uncle Sam, bearing in mind that in the eighteenthies and 'sixties feeling ran decidedly high on both sides of the Atlantic on account of the keen rivalry between American ships and those of the Mother Country.

America had made a bold bid at capturing the trade of the world. She had some of the finest shipbuilders ever known. They were go-ahead and enterprising. They had developed the building of fast clipper ships to such an extent that British shipowners were indulging in all manner of gloomy prognostications. But the British shipowner had already risen to the occasion when the American Civil War broke out and com-

pleted the process. America's brief heyday of prosperity as regarded her Mercantile Marine was over.

No wonder that the subject was a delicate one all round! On the British side this brotherly jealousy found expression in such jocularities as the anecdote now under discussion; while on the American side one need go no further than the jeremiads uttered by Captain Samuels in his autobiography.

Here is the log story for what it is worth:

It is eight bells in the forenoon watch, and the log is just about to be hove. The mate stands by the rail watching the line run out. One man holds the line high above his head, while another stands by with the sand-glass.

"Turn," sings out the mate as the white rag goes over the rail.

"Did I hear you say 'Turn,' Nathan?" leisurely inquires the man with the glass.

"Wal, yes, I guess you did."

"Then" (suiting the action to the word), "turn it is!"

The sand runs out, and the holder of the glass announces the fact by unobtrusively exclaiming, "Stop," after the fashion of the old lady in the story, who cried, "Muffins to sell—muffins to sell! I hope nobody hears me!"

"Did I hear you say 'Stop'?" inquires the mate.

"I guess you did, mister."

"Then stop it is! Eighteen and a ha'f knots fair and square!"

Another favourite pleasantry was the yarn of the old shellback who, on being asked whether it was a fact that a famous Yankee flyer in which he had served actually had been known to make twenty knots, replied:





HEAVING THE LOG



"Sure she did, my son! Ten one side an' ten t'other!"

But a truce to these international incidents! The fact is that sailors are always apt to make the most of their ships' passages, and it is likely that Americans, like every one else, were prone to do so. But let it be said once and for all that the packet ship "Dreadnought" did *not* cross the Atlantic in nine days and twenty-one hours. Where the fable originated no one can say. Certainly the skipper never gave currency to it, at any rate in his printed recollections; though the tale may have arisen out of a passage in Captain Samuels's book, where he says, after describing how the ship ran 1,080 miles in seventy-two hours, "Had the wind continued we should have landed our passengers at Liverpool under nine days." The "Dreadnought's" record passage from Sandy Hook to Liverpool was thirteen days odd, a very fine passage too.

She was built in 1853, to Captain Samuels's own specifications, by Messrs. Currie & Townsend of Newburyport, for the Red Cross Line of New York. The ships built for the line had up to that time been singularly unlucky, but the "Dreadnought" was to prove the exception. Her registered tonnage was 1,413; she was 210 feet long, and had a beam of 40 feet and a depth of 26. Although she was not a clipper ship in the true sense of the word, she made some wonderful passages. Her average west to east was twenty-one days and fifteen hours, and east to west it was twenty-four days twelve hours. During ten years she made between seventy and eighty passages. Her best performance was 3,116 miles in fourteen days, an average speed of 222 miles *per diem*. Her best passage to Liverpool was that of thirteen days twenty

hours, and one of her best to New York was nineteen days from Rock Light in February, 1854.

She was known to the packet seamen, says Captain Samuels, as "The wild boat of the Atlantic," and occasionally as the "Flying Dutchman," though the latter term was hardly applicable in her case, the original "Flying Dutchman" having gained her unenviable renown through the blasphemous habits of her skipper.

The "Dreadnought" is one of the very few famous merchant ships of whose voyages we have an account written by her own captain; in fact, I think the literary captains might almost be counted on one's fingers. His autobiography makes most entertaining reading, and—although one cannot help but take a good-sized tablespoonful of salt with some of his yarns—he might well have laid claim to yet another accomplishment, that of being an author, to his list of the various rôles a merchant skipper was competent to fill, namely, "sailor, sailmaker, rigger, carpenter, and in fact cook, doctor, lawyer, clergyman, navigator, merchant, and banker." And one can really recall instances of a number of skippers of the old school who have acted upon occasion with more or less success in a good many of the capacities mentioned.

"Doctor," for example. When the Old Man got busy with the medicine chest the hardest case might well tremble and turn pale! There is a story—something of a nautical chestnut—of a captain who was so overawed by the array of medicaments he was supposed to administer that he mixed half of them into one bottle which he labelled with the mysterious legend "Above," and the remainder in a second bottle which he labelled "Below." The patient was then asked whether the trouble was above or below an imaginary

line like the Equator, somewhere about the middle of his jersey, and he received a dose of "A" or "B" mixture according to his reply.

During the cholera epidemic of 1859 Captain Samuels contracted the disease, and his heroic remedies were such that he might reasonably have been expected to die of them without requiring any assistance from the cholera. Starting with a hot mustard bath, from which he emerged "looking like a boiled lobster," he went on to take "a mixture of brandy, cayenne pepper, laudanum, and Angostura bitters," and finished up by applying "a turpentine cloth over the entire abdomen!"

Then as to painting—many captains used always to put the finishing touches on the ship's toilet themselves; graining, for instance, that strange art, was quite a favourite one with some Old Men. As clergyman—well, we all know that a ship's captain is authorized to marry people. But his part as clergyman is usually performed on more solemn occasions, when the mainyard is hove aback while the last words are read over the shrouded shape on the grating covered by his country's flag. . . .

Captain Samuel Samuels was a native of Philadelphia, that home of the hard-case skipper and the tough-nut mate, and, like many another famous personage from the fairy-tale era downwards, he owed the inception of his career to the fact of his father's second marriage. The same house could not hold Mrs. Samuels the Second and her stepson, and accordingly the latter ran away to sea at the ripe age of eleven.

His life was one of many ups and downs. His portrait as it appears in his memoirs shows him as bearing a strong resemblance to that hero of my early

youth, Captain Marryat's "Masterman Ready," whom I always suspect the gallant captain of having created with his tongue in his cheek, in response to a request from a publisher for a sea story without any of those Dreadful Words in it. Anyway, Captain Samuels looks Masterman Ready all over: "sideboards," pilot coat, and expression of blameless integrity complete!

And yarns—oh, my sainted aunt, what yarns! . . . There's one about the Pearl of the Harem who escapes by means of a silken ladder to join Captain Samuels's friend, the Swedish skipper, who still cherishes in his faithful breast the memory of the fair-haired playmate of his boyhood, who was carried off by bandits while still a child. For the sake of his lost playmate he undertakes the rescue of the fair captive; and a year or two later Captain Samuels meets his Swedish friend again, happily married to the erstwhile Pearl of the Harem, who—but need I go further?—turned out to have been the fair-haired playmate of his boyhood all the time.

I can swallow a good deal, but somehow I can't quite swallow that yarn! It's too neat. The loose ends fit in too nicely. It sounds suspiciously like a reminiscence of an episode in his career when, in the intervals of his labours in a cotton gang at New Orleans, "where they roll de cotton down," he acted as what he rather quaintly describes as a "supernumerary," or, in other words, "walked on" at a New Orleans theatre. Things don't happen like that. I have heard plenty of stranger tales, and believed them too. But, I am bound to confess, that story did make me think that there may have been something in one of Captain Samuels's first skipper's remarks:

"Young man, did you ever hear of Tom Pepper?"



Now Tom Pepper was a legendary mariner who (so the story goes) was kicked out of the nether regions because he told such cuffers that the Father of Lies himself couldn't believe 'em !

Anyway, after that it is perfectly easy to believe the one about his being nearly swallowed by a shark. The shark might have been able to swallow him, but I doubt if even a shark could swallow all his stories.

He had a narrow escape of getting a dozen or two at the grating. He served in that queer naval mushroom growth, the Texan Navy. He sailed for a time as mate in the British ship "Caledonia," whose skipper was on the lookout for a hard-case Yankee "blower and striker." But Samuels didn't like the British service, and his reasons make rather curious reading.

"In an English ship," he says, "Jack is as good as his master, and he is a chronic growler. This does not suit American ideas. . . . An Englishman's prerogative is to grumble, but we break him of the habit after his head has come into contact with a belaying pin a few times."

He also experienced the "Shanghai Passage." The term, according to Captain Samuels, originated in the later days of the American packet and California clipper services, when it was difficult, owing to high wages ashore, to get men to go to sea of their own free will.

"This barter in human flesh," he piously observes, "is no longer practised"—this in 1887, when the crimps of Frisco were plying as merry a trade as ever they did !

On the occasion when Captain Samuels was shanghai'd several of the crew died from the ill-treatment received during the voyage. The captain—she was

a Baltimore ship—had paid eighty dollars apiece to the crimps for his crew, and expressed his amiable intention of killing them if they couldn't work.

Once again young Samuels had a narrow escape from a similar experience, this time in New Orleans, his fellow victims including a "stiff 'un" who had recently died of yellow fever ; but this time he managed by swimming for it to get away from the ship before she sailed.

It was in 1853 that he became commander of the "Dreadnought." At the same time he "got religion," and gave up the use of the varied vocabulary with which his long and wide experience had endowed him. He must have been in his unregenerate days what I have heard described as a "beautiful swearer" ; but he had henceforth to content himself with such resources as were provided in that line by the more denunciatory of the psalms.

It is curious to reflect that during the packet ship era the passenger-carrying trade of the Atlantic Ocean was almost entirely in the hands of the Americans, and remained so until the invasion by steam. The celebrated lines of sailing packets—the "Swallow-tail," "Black Ball," "Dramatic," and other fleets—were all American owned, although their crews were very largely recruited in Liverpool.

The "Dreadnought" is described as a "semi-clipper," and her portrait shows her as decidedly more sharp-ended than the older packets, which were more of less bluff and even Dutch in type, though she was without the extreme lines of the Mackay and other clippers. She was, says her captain, "never passed in anything over a four-knot breeze," and the smallest canvas she ever carried as long as the wind would let her keep her course was double-reefed topsails.

She was never hove-to until one occasion presently to be described.

Until he took command of the "Dreadnought" Captain Samuels's wife accompanied him on all his voyages for several years, and most of his children were born at sea, their father's ship being their childhood's home. When the first baby was born the occasion was signalized by the serving out of a double-decker sea-pie, a dish which it may be worth while to describe briefly.

A layer of salt pork, onions, potatoes, and what not forms the first stratum; then comes a layer of paste, the sort you can get your teeth into; next another layer of meat and vegetables; and lastly a second crust on top of all. Sometimes even a third "deck" is added—and such a dish, steaming hot from the galley, to hungry and sparsely fed men was a repast for a king.

Captain Samuels's religion was rather of the kind professed by Cromwell's New Model or the New England pioneers. His gospel was "Trust in God and keep your powder dry"; and although he trusted in Providence, he did not forget the shipmaster's golden maxim—to use the "blue pigeon" (or deep sea lead) as often as possible.

He attributes the "Dreadnought's" uniformly good passages to the fact that he always drove her as hard by night as by day—and in the North Atlantic that means a good deal more than appears on the face of it. Risks of ice, and of collisions in fog with other vessels, were of course far greater in the dark than in the daylight. But Captain Samuels cared nothing for that. What the "Dreadnought" couldn't carry she must drag; and on the whole his daring policy was justified by results, for the "Dreadnought's" career was remarkably free from serious casualties.

Captain Samuels refers once to "the race which she had with the clipper ship 'Lightning' in the Channel" (presumably St. George's Channel is meant) in 1858. I have not been able to find any record of this race, but the "Lightning Gazette" for January 7, 1855, describes an encounter between the two ships which might have ended badly for one or both of them.

"During the night" (the paragraph runs) "we were nearly run into by a large American clipper, the 'Dreadnought' of New York; she being on the port tack, it was her duty to give way, but true to her name and with the independence of her nation she held her course disdaining to turn aside. Our captain" (Enright) "with praiseworthy prudence put his ship about and thus avoided a collision."

The crew of the "Dreadnought" was, needless to say, invariably composed of typical "packet rats"—Liverpool Irishmen, very many of them, hard, reckless, dangerous fellows, but—as even Captain Samuels, no lover of the British race, and especially the British sailor, is obliged to admit—the finest and most reliable of seamen in an emergency.

The packet rat usually went to sea with nothing but what he stood up in. He spent his money to the last farthing in the stews and drinking dens of Liverpool, trusting to luck to replenish his wardrobe at the expense of his more provident shipmates; and, says Captain Samuels, he used often to notice some of these men getting stouter every day, until at last he would order them to strip and find that they were wearing several layers of appropriated clothing.

There was a certain gang of these packet rats, the hardest cases in Liverpool, who were known as the "Bloody Forties." These men, amongst whom were

some who had been concerned in the murder of their captain while on passage from Liverpool to New York, had put it up among them to "give the skipper of the 'Dreadnought' a swim"—the compact having been made in what the captain, with one of his favourite touches of melodrama, styles "Mother Riley's Den."

The voyage was, as might be expected, a lively one ; and its events need none of the rather bombastic embellishments the narrator has thought fit to employ to make them sufficiently thrilling. I don't for one moment believe that Captain Samuels ever really said to his hard-case crew : "Men, you have found your match" ; "Death to the first man who dares advance" ; or "You cowardly dog, you shall bite the dust for this." But, leaving these literary trimmings aside, the story of the Mutiny of the Bloody Forties makes capital and exciting reading.

For once the "Dreadnought" was not well officered. The mate was an old man, the second a coward, so that Captain Samuels had to rely entirely upon himself to cope with the crisis. His first precaution was to order the crew to produce their knives, and have their points broken by the carpenter ; and the murmurs with which the order was received gave him an opportunity to put matters on a plain footing.

The order was given for all hands to lay aft, and the captain briefly explained that their intentions were well known to him. Some of them had sailed with him before, and knew (he said) that they would not get their own way without a fight ; and, having stated in clear terms that he did not intend to stand for mutiny, he ordered them to be served with a glass of grog all round, as he saw some of them shivering for the want of it.



The following morning, as the ship was going about, she nearly missed stays through the slowness of the man in charge of the head-sheets, and a little later the man at the wheel failed to give the customary response to an order, and followed this up by a piece of deliberate insolence which resulted in Captain Samuels laying him out in style by the wheel. Finally, on the order being given to haul taut the weather mainbrace it was met with a flat refusal to comply.

"Why don't you obey the order?" demanded the captain.

The men replied that they would return to duty when their shipmate, the mutinous helmsman, who had been put in irons, was released.

Captain Samuels now hastily armed himself, and confronted the mutineers with a pistol in each hand and a cutlass at his side; and, he adds, "it was well known that with either hand I was a dead shot"—though he did not keep his hand in, as the redoubtable Bully Waterman is said to have done, by winging the men on the yard from his station at the break of the poop.

The passengers, in the meantime, were beginning to get a trifle nervous, and appealed to the captain to put into Queenstown, from which port the ship was not far distant. His reply was merely that the ship was bound to New York, "and to New York," he added, "she shall go!"

The mutineers showed no sign of climbing down. Captain Samuels went for'ard to treat with them, and told them that they should have neither food nor water until they returned to duty, but his ultimatum was only received with howls, jeers, and threats.

The ship had now to be handled by the officers and boys alone. The wind freshening considerably, the



royals were furled and later the topgallantsails. The topsails could not come in, as the hands available would not have been enough to hoist them again.

Presently, however, the weather moderated, and the topgallantsails were again set. The men still refusing duty, the ship was put about, the captain himself, with the third officer, attending to the foretack and fore-sheets.

A number of the steerage passengers showed a tendency to side with the mutineers. It is more than likely that some of them were actually concerned in the plan to seize the ship, and had come aboard with that end in view, while others had been persuaded by them that timid counsels were the only way to save the situation. Captain Samuels, however, pointed out to them that to assist the mutineers in any way would render them also liable to the same penalties. He finished up by threatening to put anyone in irons who should attempt to join the crew, and actually carried the threat into practice in one case by way of encouraging the others.

Fifty-six hours had now passed since the men had first refused duty. No one aft had had sleep, nor had anyone for'ard had food. But they still defied the skipper with howls and jeers.

An attack upon the galley might soon be looked for, and in preparation for such a contingency a number of emigrants—mostly men who had served in the German Army—were armed with short iron bars, a consignment of which happened to be among the cargo. Two members of the crew also came aft, threw their knives overboard, and expressed their desire to rejoin their officers. The ringleader of the mutiny had begun to get too big for his boots, and had laid out with a serving mallet one of his followers who showed signs of weakening.

The deserters confirmed the view that the crew would make a desperate attempt to raid the provision store during the night. At eight bells the attack began, but the sight of the reinforced garrison aft soon quelled the mutineers' ardour, and in spite of the defiant attitude still kept up by the ringleaders, Finnigan, Sweeney, and Casey, the resistance rapidly crumbled away. One by one the rebels threw their knives over the side, while the captain, to show his good faith, handed over his pistols to one of the passengers.

Finnigan, however, still obstinately refused to own himself beaten, and his sullen refusal to eat humble pie brought the old Adam in his captain to the surface. Finnigan found himself knocked head-over-heels down the forecastle scuttle before he knew what hit him.

A search revealed a knife hidden inside his shirt, and his lieutenants, Casey and Sweeney, proved to be similarly heeled.

"Now, men," said the captain, "let it be understood that you are to jump when you are spoken to, and instead of walking you are to run to obey the orders given! The last order I gave you, which you disobeyed, was 'Haul taut the weather mainbrace.' I now repeat it, 'Haul taut the weather mainbrace!'"

And the Bloody Forties jumped! They hauled away with such a will, says Captain Samuels, that he feared they would spring the yard.

Coffee was now served out to all hands, except the recalcitrant Finnigan, who still refused to apologize. He was then put into the "sweat box" in irons, and in half an hour he gave in and asked the captain's pardon, adding that whoever called him (the captain) a coward was a d——d liar.

And there is a good deal of dry Yankee humour in

the captain's rejoinder: "You may leave out the 'd——d.' If anyone is going to swear on board this packet, it is myself!"

The mutiny was now completely crushed. "Calashee" watches were the order of the day, as they very often were in the packet service. The men worked like Trojans, and they parted company at the end of the voyage with expressions of mutual goodwill.

"I then," concludes Captain Samuels, "said a few words to them. I reviewed a part of my fore-castle life, I told them how I had been as they were, a prey to the sharks ashore—how I had been drugged, bought, sold, and robbed. I begged them to break the chains that bound them to the depraved life they were leading, and assert the manhood God had given them for a better purpose than to be the slaves of boarding-house keepers and crimps"; and he finished up with a prayer "which brought tears to the eyes of most of these hardened men." How he must have enjoyed himself!

"I never had or expect to have a better set of sailors with me," were his last words to the erstwhile mutineers, and they in return expressed their willingness to sail to hell or anywhere else with him whenever he wanted them.

Possibly, however, this reformation did not prove any more lasting than most of its kind, for it was not long afterwards that the "Dreadnought" sailed with a coloured crew.

Now a coloured crew has its points. It is a crew which is easy to control, and it is a wonder for shantying, with a stave for anything and everything. But—especially in such ships as the Atlantic packets—no worse choice could be conceived. The bitter weather in which the half-clad Liverpool Irishman shivered,

cursed, and endured, reduced the light-hearted children of the sun to shuddering incapacity. There were no "Bloody Forties" among them, but in the long run both ship and captain were in far more serious peril from their demoralization in face of danger—combined with the incompetence of the mate—than they had ever been from Finnigan and his mutineers. Captain Samuels describes how the officer of the watch had to chase the negroes round with a length of ratline stuff, otherwise they would simply have collapsed and, with the queer animal stoicism of the negro race, allowed themselves to freeze to death.

As luck would have it, the "Dreadnought," thus manned, found herself during the month of February in that part of the Western Ocean—latitude 8, longitude 45—known among the packet seamen as the "Devil's Blow-hole" by reason of the terrific hurricanes often encountered there. The "Dreadnought" was just about to be hove-to for the first time on record, when a tremendous sea swept her from end to end. The men at the wheel lost their heads altogether, and put the helm down instead of up. The full force of the sea struck the ship, and she lay broached-to in the trough of the sea, her lee-rail on a level with the water, and the seas pouring over her as over a half-tide rock.

The sea had swept the captain away from his post on the poop and jammed him under a spare spar which had broken loose from its lashings. He hung for a few minutes half-over the lee-rail, until a fortunate roll of the ship flung him in-board again; but his leg had been broken by the drifting spar, and he had also sustained a bad cut on the head.

The storm now abated, and the "Dreadnought"

was able to clear herself of the weight of water on deck. The captain had himself carried below, and it was found that he had a compound fracture below the knee, and that an artery had been punctured. Several futile attempts—with the assistance of three strong men!—having been made to reduce the fracture, the captain then called for a knife with the heroic intention of amputating his own leg. The second officer dissuaded him from this desperate remedy, pulling up his own trousers to display his crooked legs, which had been similarly broken by a fall from aloft some years before.

The ship was still in a precarious position. She had lost her rudder in the storm, and attempts to ship a jury rudder ended in failure. The carpenter had been killed when the big sea came on board, and the chief officer was but a broken reed. A French ship which was spoken could not undertake to tow the cripple into Fayal, and at last in despair the captain gave orders for the ship to be backed on a course for the island, all efforts to get her head round having been in vain. She made 183 miles sternway in fifty-two hours, at the end of which time the sea fell at last smooth enough to enable the second jury rudder to be shipped, and land was made without further difficulty.

In a fortnight's time the doctors at Fayal resumed operations on the leg. One of their measures was to fix it to a tackle, which was hauled upon by three sailors, to draw the limb into position. The proceeding sounds more like the gentle suasion of the rack than a surgical operation, and we are not told whether the sailors "sweated it up" to some such refrain as—

Oh, poor Old Man, your leg must go—  
And they say so—and they hope so. . . .

However, the captain, having endured so much, refused to allow the next applicant to relieve him of his leg, and he was finally taken back to New York, where more skilful treatment saved the limb.

And here his reminiscences end. He lived to a ripe old age—somewhere in the nineties. His old ship did not last so long. She was wrecked in 1869 off Cape Horn, the graveyard of so many famous ships before and since.



## CHAPTER IV

### LONDON PRIDE

#### I. THE BLACKWALLER "NEWCASTLE"

**T**HE China clipper holds the palm among ships for beauty and grace, the Liverpool emigrant ship for strength and swiftness. But in certain respects those beautiful little ships have never been surpassed which made the name of Blackwall synonymous the world over with the perfection of seaworthiness and of honest craftsmanship.

They were never built with an eye to speed alone, though some, indeed the greater number of them, could and did make very excellent passages upon occasion. But the points in which they were pre-eminent were, firstly, the lofty pitch of the shipbuilder's art which was attained in nearly every one of them; and, secondly, the skill and discipline of their officers and crews. The "Newcastle" was a typical Blackwall frigate of the later period, although she was not actually Blackwall built, but came from Pile's well-known Sunderland yard, whence were turned out about this time a large number of ships for various Blackwall firms.

The earlier Blackwallers were, of course, all built on Thames-side, at the famous yard which had been building ships since the days of the Tudors, and it was not until 1852 that Green's first ship was built at Sunderland—the "Roxburgh Castle," namely, in which Will Terriss, the darling of London audiences

a generation ago, had a brief experience of life afloat, and "swallowed the anchor" after perhaps the shortest trial of it ever known. The pangs of seasickness were too much for him, and he came home in the tug from the Downs.

The "Newcastle" was about the same size as the average wooden Blackwaller, few of which exceeded 1,100 tons. Her measurements were:—

Registered tonnage	..	..	1,137 tons
Length (stem to sternpost)	..	..	196 ft. 8 in.
Main breadth to outside plank	..	36	6
Depth of hold from tonnage deck	..	22	5
Length of poop	..	..	77
Length of forecastle	..	..	37

She was a skysail yarder, like many of the Blackwallers, in which respect they followed the example of the earlier East Indiamen. It is a great mistake to suppose that "flying kites" were an innovation of the clipper ship era. It was, as a matter of fact, customary to pile sail on sail long before it ever entered the heads of shipbuilders to increase the speed of a ship by improvements in the lines of her hull. The sail plans of some of John Company's ships are truly amazing—including not only skysails, but moonsails, star-gazers, and even cloud-scrapers.

She also carried royal stunsails on all masts, a driver or spanker with two reefs, and a trysail gaff and sail at the main. This last sail is a noteworthy point of the "Newcastle's" rig. Although often carried by ships of the Royal Navy, where it was generally termed a "spencer," it was a very unusual sail in a merchant ship. The only other examples I have been able to find are the "Harbinger" and the



THE "NEWCASTLE" TOWING PAST MAPLIN LIGHT



"Cutty Sark." Probably the explanation of the "Newcastle's" carrying one is that she was fitted out under the directions of an ex-naval rigger, which was very often the case at Blackwall.

She had the old-fashioned whisker booms on goosenecks at the bowsprit end to extend the head rigging, and the characteristic Blackwall quarter galleries, which were fitted as shower-baths, and had racks on the top for the wash-deck buckets, which could be carried there safely whatever the weather. Her square stern ports were also typical of the period, and she had big, square sliding ports in her cabins. Other points were a topgallant forecastle, and a very long poop, which however had the disadvantage that it made the deck space very cramped.

She carried the large ship's company usual in Blackwall vessels: four mates, a surgeon, nine or ten midshipmen, boatswain, carpenter, sailmaker, donkeyman, three quartermasters, four foretopmen, four maintopmen, and twenty other ratings; as well as stewards, cooks, butcher and mate, and baker and mate, most of whom were active members of the ship's company when all hands were called.

The Blackwall seaman was on the whole a remarkably fine specimen of his class. Many of the Blackwall crews were recruited from ex-naval men—in fact, the best, for in those days the old-fashioned training in seamanship was still kept up in the Royal Service in those beautiful little brigs which are so pleasant a memory to the older school of naval men. The time had not yet come, as it was to come later, when the ex-naval rating was considered about the worst man possible for a windjammer, on account of his absolute ignorance of anything connected with sail.

The sort of seamanship which prevailed in the

Blackwallers is exemplified by a remarkable performance on the part of one of the "Newcastle's" main-topmen, Nicholas by name, on the occasion of the sports held to celebrate the Crossing of the Line. He won the masthead race in the time of one minute fifty-nine seconds—this included starting from the deck, touching the skysail truck, and coming down by way of the backstay!

The Esplanade moorings at Calcutta in the 'sixties, when the Blackwall fleets were at their prime, were a sight which those who saw it will never forget.

"There were stretched along," says an eyewitness, "from bow to next ship's stern, from twenty to thirty of the handsomest ships in the world, flying the famous house-flags of Green, Money Wigram, Joseph Somes, Marshall, Smith, Willis, and Dunbar. Man-of-war style and discipline were always maintained. The hammocks came up into the nettings every morning and came down at sunset. Each ship was provided with a fiddler, who played at least four hours daily; but the fiddle did not stop the use of the shanties."

Here perhaps would be seen an incoming ship with her pilot on board. The Hooghly pilot in those days was a very important personage indeed. When he boarded a ship at the Sandheads he always brought with him a supply of brandy and soda and a quantity of ice, and, reclining on a cane chair on the poop, would call out at intervals, "Chokra! Brandy pawnee buraf lao!"—the while his junior pilot in the chains hove the lead and called the depths, a servant hauling in the lead.

And now for a brief account of the "Newcastle's" career.

She was originally built for the Indian passenger service, in which she left London on her maiden



voyage on April 10, 1859, R. D. Crawford, commander. Her best passages while in this trade were eighty-one, eighty-three, and eighty-four days, and on her fifth voyage she was ashore near the Sandheads, but got off without damage.

In the 'sixties she ran for a spell in the West Indian coolie business, together with many other well-known passenger ships, such as the "Clarence," "Alnwick Castle," and "Tyburnia," and some, like the "Sheila," specially built for the trade.

At that time the labour difficulty in the islands owing to the emancipation of the slaves had become so acute that the importation of indentured coolie labour had been decided upon. The coolies, who were recruited under the strictest Government supervision, were indentured for five years to one or other of the estates which had applied for labour. At the expiration of this period they might re-engage as free labourers; and after a further term of not less than ten years they were allowed a free passage back to the port of recruitment. They might, however, if they preferred, take up a free grant of ten acres of Crown lands, which many chose rather than a return to the current Indian agricultural wage of a few annas a day, to say nothing of all manner of unpleasant caste penances incurred by having undertaken a sea voyage.

Native officials were in charge of the coolies, four "Sirdars" to every hundred, and they had of course their own cooks to prepare their meals according to caste requirements. After their first bouts of seasickness, they generally got very fat and thriving—fortunately for the doctors in charge of them, whose fees were calculated at so much for each coolie who reached his destination alive, somewhat after the Chinese system of paying the physician so long as

the patient remains well. Their principal amusement they found in such monotonous music as they could extract from their native drums.

It was while she was engaged in this trade that the "Newcastle's" career very nearly came to an abrupt and premature close. On October 5, 1864, she was lying in the Hooghly, loaded for sea and ready to take on board a complement of coolies for Trinidad. A north-easterly gale with heavy rain began to blow on the evening of the 4th, increasing the following day to cyclone strength. All through the morning of the 5th the storm increased, accompanied by blinding rain, the wind veering towards the south, and the glass falling until it touched  $27.97^{\circ}$ . The storm wave, accompanied by an unusually high tide, drove two hundred deepwatermen from their moorings, and sank countless numbers of lighters, small boats, and harbour craft.

The "Newcastle" held on until 1.30 p.m., when her inshore mooring carried away and she drove alongside the ship "Winchester," carrying away several spars in the process. The danger from drifting ships was almost equal to that in a naval engagement. One after another drove blindly past bow and stern, and at last the "Newcastle" herself broke adrift and drove across the river, her cable parting at ninety-five fathoms. The wind was still veering towards the south, and the rain was so blinding that the drifting ships were mere vague, unrecognizable shapes until they suddenly loomed out of the murk close at hand.

The gale had now blown itself out.

The "Newcastle" was fast ashore across one of the many "ghauts," or stone landing places, in the river. She had lost her foretopmast over the side, and had

also suffered considerable damage from other ships, among them the steamer "Mauritius" and the ship "Bolton Abbey," the latter smashing her figure-head and forcibly appropriating her port anchor.

Tugs could not move the ship at all, and a channel had to be cut in the ghaut by five hundred coolies working for four days. The cost of getting the vessel off amounted altogether to £10,000. The wonder was that her back was not broken, for she lay there thirteen days with a full cargo on board, the stone ghaut under her, and her bow and stern in soft mud.

In 1870 the "Newcastle" was transferred to the Australian service, and for many years she was a very well-known sight in Melbourne Harbour, with her gear all taut, yards squared, ropes flemished down, her brasses and her freshly gilded trucks flashing in the sun. Her masts and mastheads were painted mast colour, her yards black, her boats, paintwork, and figure-head gleaming white. In the Indian service everything aloft was painted white. Her figure-head, by the way, was a bearded personage wearing some kind of a coronet, and probably represented the Duke of Newcastle.

Her commander at this time was Captain C. E. le Poer Trench, a fine example of the old type of Black-wall captain. A strict disciplinarian when occasion demanded, he had, nevertheless, an ample share of Irish geniality and humour. After Green's fleet was dispersed in the 'eighties he went into steam, among his commands being the Orient liner "Chimborazo," and for some time before he died he was in charge of the good ship Billingsgate Market, one of the shore "plums" of the nautical profession, carrying with it a delightful residence overlooking the river—just the

right place in which an old sailorman may enjoy the evening of his days.

A familiar object in Melbourne Harbour at this time was the old convict ship "Success," and the tramp and challenge of the sentries on her deck could be heard all through the night. Many people may remember this ship when she was brought over to England as a popular show some years ago. As a matter of fact she was more or less of a pious fraud ; for though she was undoubtedly a very old ship, and interesting on that account, she was not what most people understand by the term "convict ship."

Originally an East Indiaman, built in 1798, she was deserted by her crew in Hobson's Bay during the gold rush. Presumably she was on her last legs then as a seagoing vessel, for she never sailed again. In 1852 she was, together with several other ships similarly deserted, converted into a prison ship. Her lower deck was turned into dark cells, into which no light whatever was allowed to penetrate, and she was used as a punishment dépôt for convicts who had broken prison rules.

But in the days of the "Success" the days of the transportation system had, it should be remembered, been long since over, though its evil fruits remained in the numbers of lawless and violent men with whom the young dominion had to contend.

Passengers in the "Newcastle" and similar ships had a very different life from that led by the ocean traveller of to-day. They had, for one thing, to provide their own cabin furniture and bedding. The first-class passengers had their cabins in the poop and were allowed to promenade there. The second- and third-class were berthed in the lower deck ; and, said an old Blackwall officer to me, it "must have been hell."

The single women were berthed under the poop, and were allowed up at stated times to take walking exercise. At the hour appointed for their poop exercise, the deck always got a good sprinkling of sand, and the scrape of a couple of hundred pairs of feet scoured the planking so effectually that it saved quite an amount of holystoning.

The single men were confined to the fore part of the ship, where their quarters were, so that sisters and brothers, fathers and daughters, and even sweethearts were kept strictly apart, and were not allowed to exchange a word during the whole of the long passage. The precaution, hard though it sounds, was no doubt quite a necessary one. The Dominions in those days did not pick and choose their would-be citizens and citizenesses, as they do now, and the result was that the company in an emigrant ship was decidedly mixed. Hence, any laxity during so long a voyage as that to "the Colonies" might quite conceivably have been the cause of a considerable scandal.

The plight of the married couples was, if anything, even more unenviable. Their quarters were situated in the lower deck amidships. There were no separate cabins. The berths were arranged in tiers of two and sometimes of three, and as they were only temporary affairs, knocked up by the carpenters according to the number required, it was no uncommon occurrence for the upper one to collapse with its occupants on top of the couple below—hence, no doubt, upper berths would be in considerable demand, as in such an eventuality the topmost passenger gets decidedly the better of two evils.

The narrow alley-way between the tiers of berths was the only space there was for exercise when the passengers were battened down, as very often



happened ; and even that was so packed with the emigrants' possessions that one had to climb over them to make any progress. The atmosphere was stifling. Instances are recorded of people having died of suffocation while battened down during a cyclone, and in some ships, when the passengers had been under hatches for a long spell, charcoal used to be burnt between decks to purify the fetid air.

The tedium and squalor of such an experience must have been appalling : nothing to break the monotony but the ceaseless crashing of the seas against the vessel's side, and the creakings and groanings inseparable from a wooden ship in a seaway, no light except such as could penetrate through a dirty pane of glass perhaps eight inches square. The rules as to lights, moreover, were very strict, necessitating total darkness from " lights out "—generally about nine o'clock—until daybreak. No wonder that men and women thus herded together gave up in despair any attempt to preserve the decencies of life, and walked about, as an eyewitness put it, " as if they were in the Garden of Eden ! "

After such an ordeal they must have thought twice about it before they decided to take the return journey ; so possibly the conditions of ocean travel may have indirectly had their share in assisting permanently to people the Dominions.

In fair weather the emigrants were allowed on the main deck, but in the case of the " Newcastle " they had very little room even there to stretch their cramped limbs. Her exceptionally long poop—seventy-five feet—took a great deal from the space, and the fore-castle accounted for a further thirty-seven. The ninety feet still remaining was still more encroached upon by a large deckhouse containing the cook's



galleys, the surgery, the butcher's and baker's shops, and the condenser for fresh water ; to say nothing of the pig and sheep pens, the cow house, spare spars, tubs in which topsail halyards were coiled down, harness casks for salt junk and pork, and the fife-rails surrounding the main- and fore-masts.

In some of the ships—notably the Liverpool Black Ballers—the passengers were encouraged to tail on to brace and halyard on occasion, and heartily they must have welcomed such a diversion. But the plentifully manned Blackwallers with their naval discipline would certainly not have encouraged such amateur assistance in working the ship, though one does read of passengers killing time helping to scrub down the poop !

One well-known captain's wife in the Colonies trade used to turn the passengers' leisure to shrewd account.

She always took on board with her a plentiful supply of the dress materials and trimmings in vogue at the time, as well as some of the latest fashion books and patterns. Then she enlisted a dozen or so of the young women emigrants who were handy with the needle, and set them to work to make up, under her direction, a stock of the very latest fashionable models to display to the Colonial ladies at the port of arrival. Thus she was able to make a nice little profit out of the time which otherwise would have hung so heavy on her own and her assistants' hands, and it was no wonder that with so admirably resourceful a business woman to assist him the captain soon became part—indeed principal—owner of his ship.

The old "Newcastle" in her later days made a lot of water. In the tropics she had to be pumped out every four hours, and when running in bad weather the

pumps were manned all the time, so that the main deck was generally wet and uncomfortable.

Pumping ship, so important a part of the seaman's duties in the days of the wooden ship, is now a negligible quantity in the day's work. An iron ship that required to be pumped all the time would very soon go to the bottom altogether. And with the pumping went also the pumping shanties—among them some of the most beautiful and plaintive of the many beautiful old melodies which were so inseparable a part of the old-time seaman's life. Even in the days of the later iron and steel clipper ships, a pumping shanty would very rarely be heard applied to its original purpose; though, as a matter of fact, some of them survived long after their first use was part of the dead past. Some of the best-known windlass or capstan shanties were originally pumping songs.

Chief among these pumping shanties was the celebrated ditty of "Old Stormy," whose words, or something like them, are given below. The tune is a wonderfully fine one, and when used in its original application it must have been singularly effective, with the steady beat and clank of the pumps and the gush of the water making a sort of rough-and-ready *obbligato* to the tune.

I remember a friend of mine telling me once an incident of his apprenticeship in a big Liverpool four-poster. She was dismasted in the South Pacific, and while pumping her out they raised the song of "Old Stormy."

Out came the Old Man from the chart-room in a towering passion.

"If ye must sing, damn ye, sing something cheerful. . . ."

One can understand it. "Stormy" is a melancholy

tune at the best of times ; and to a man frantic with anxiety for the fate of his ship the weird, mournful cadences of it might well seem too much to be borne.

" OLD STORMY "

Stormy's dead, that good old man—  
 To me, aye, Storm along !—  
 Stormy's dead, that good old man—  
 Aye, aye, aye, Mister Storm along !

Stormy's dead, and gone to rest :  
 Of all the skippers he was best. . . .

We dug his grave both wide and deep,  
 And left him there to take his sleep. . . .  
 We dug his grave both deep and wide,  
 And left him sleeping where he died. . . .

Stormy's dead, that good old man—  
 We shall not see his like again—  
 Aye, aye, aye, Mister Storm along. . . .

Another favourite pumping shanty was " Poor Paddy Works on the Railway," which starts out with eighteen hundred and fifty-one and goes on to eighteen hundred and sixty something, when his adventures come to a fortunate conclusion. This song was later classified as a capstan shanty, and as a matter of fact so also was the well-known " Leave her, Johnnie," which as a pumping song must have had a grim significance all its own.

In the Blackwallers it is possible that pumping shanties were not invariably used. Many of the ships carried a fiddler, whose music took the place of the

shantyman's vocal accompaniment, and as a great part of the crews were men who had served in the Royal Navy, where shantying was all but unknown, it is quite likely that pumping shanties were not general. The shanty came very largely into popularity in the day of the undermanned ship, for was it not, as the old saying went, "worth ten men on a rope?"

The "Newcastle" made some excellent passages to and from Melbourne, and was in company at one time and another with many of the most noted ships of her day. Among those she spoke on her first voyage to the Colonies were the Blackwallers "Kent," "Renown," and "Carlisle Castle." In 1875 she was eighty-seven days land to land, and ninety-seven dock to pier. Her best consecutive runs when running the easting down were 268, 243, 233, 257, 255, and 200, and on a bowline in the north-east Trades she made on one occasion 223 miles, which goes to show that she could work well to windward.

Her homeward passage in the same year was the best she ever made from the Colonies.

She cleared Port Phillip Heads on July 12, 1875, the ship "Cardigan Castle" being in company. This ship was not a Blackwaller, but was probably one of Skinner's Castles, some very fine little ships, of which only the memory remains. She arrived in London Docks on October 1st, having been seventy-seven days between land and land, and eighty-seven pier to dock.

The "Cardigan Castle" arrived on the same tide, though the two ships had never sighted each other since leaving Melbourne. Could there be a better example of the truth expressed in Arthur Hugh Clough's poem :

As ships, becalmed at eve, that lay  
 With canvas drooping, side by side,  
 Two towers of sail at dawn of day  
 Are scarce long leagues apart descried ;

When fell the night, up sprung the breeze,  
 And all the darkling hours they plied,  
 Nor dreamt but each the selfsame seas  
 By each was cleaving side by side. . . .

At dead of night their sails were filled,  
 And onward each rejoicing steered—  
 Ah, neither blame, for neither willed  
 Or wist, what first with dawn appeared !

But O blithe breeze ! and O great seas,  
 Though ne'er, that earliest parting past,  
 On your wide plain they join again,  
 Together lead them home at last !

One port, methought, alike they sought,  
 One purpose hold where'er they fare,—  
 O bounding breeze, O rushing seas,  
 At last, at last, unite them there !

The poem may mean little, perhaps, to the modern steam-borne traveller ; but it must have been beyond a doubt suggested by some actual experience like that just recorded, such as fell to the lot of many passengers in the days of sail, when, also, a knowledge of the sea among non-seafaring folk was more general than it is at the present time. If a man made a voyage to the Colonies in the 'sixties he could not help learning something about the life of the ship, and, as already explained, in some ways he got more discomfort than the sailors ; whereas anyone may go to the Antipodes and back in one of our big floating hotels and bet energetically every day on the ship's run without having the slightest idea which end of her is going first.



Leaving London on December 6, 1875, she was one hundred and eleven days making Sandridge Pier, but the length of the passage on this occasion is explained by the fact that she had to put into Bahia on account of an accident to her condenser. In point of fact, she made some very fine runs in the Forties, the best being one of 281 miles, with the wind fresh from the south-west and all sail set to main royal.

The following day the wind increased to a full gale, before which the ship ran under lower topsails and foresail. Terrific squalls of wind, accompanied by hail and snow, kept coming up from the Antarctic and a tremendous sea carried away the topgallant sail. The glass went down to 28.85, and, says Captain C. E. la Poer Trench in a statement to the "Melbourne Argus," the ship kept before the gale splendidly, and scarcely took in a drop of water.

The big iron clipper "Oneida" of 2,300 tons fared decidedly worse in the same gale, as appears from the account of her experience in the same paper :

"Tremendous bodies of water came thundering on board, the sea overrunning both sides and threatening to bury her. At 3.30 she was struck on the port quarter by a lump of a sea, which burst in the windows and filled the saloon. The door of one of the second cabins was stove, and the apartment filled. About 6.40 a.m. the sea, which had continued to rise, rolled in over port and starboard bulwarks with irresistible and appalling force, smashing in the doors of the midshiphouse on deck and, forcing its way through and through, completely gutted the cabins, to the utter consternation of the passengers, who were all washed out of their berths, and were knocking about amongst the wreck of smashed partitions, chests, bedding, and



stores, in an agony of terror lest they should be washed overboard. Willie Bell was swept overboard beyond reach of recovery. . . . During the storm the maintopsail sheet was carried away, and the sail split, the foretopmast staysail being also blown out of the boltropes. The foretopsail clew was then got up and the sail goosewinged, and although large bodies of water were still rolling inboard the ship went along more steadily. The seas had not only inundated decks and cabins but had cleared away everything movable, including binnacle and compasses, and also raised the grating from under the feet of the man at the wheel. The galley was gutted and poop ladders washed overboard, one of them being washed back again and bursting the cabin door open."

This was on March 12, 1876, and the "Newcastle's" run for the next day was 279 miles, showing that the staunch little ship had not suffered much damage from the storm.

Her homeward passage in 1876 was eighty-seven days land to land and ninety-four from Sandridge Pier to Blackwall Docks.

Easting she made consecutive runs of 258, 251, 246, 260, 249, 238, 258, 201, and 302 miles, the last when running before a full gale with everything set to main topgallant sail. Ice was sighted about this time. Again she made runs of 221, 221, 269, 260, 251, and 259 miles on consecutive days.

Running free in the south-east Trades her distances were 182, 266, 257, 263, 263, 271, and 221 miles, and in the north-east Trades on a bowline she ran 225, 240, and 211 miles.

Both on the outward and the homeward run on her next voyage she was eighty-nine days land to land.

This was almost the end of her time under Green's house-flag. She was sold in 1877, but, unlike most of her contemporaries, she remained under the Red Ensign right to the end.

Her first purchasers were Foley & Co., of Fenchurch Street, who sold her again in 1882 to a Sydney owner. One of her old officers, when in the P. & O. steamer "Australia," lying alongside Circular Quay, chanced to see an old vessel at the other side of the horseshoe which had a strangely familiar look. He strolled round to see her, and found that it was indeed none other than the old "Newcastle," though all her smartness was gone.

She was lost, how and where I know not, in 1883.

## II. THE BLACKWALL MIDSHIPMAN

The value of the old Blackwallers as a training ground for officers of the Merchant Service cannot be over-estimated. The pity of it is that we have in this age of progress nothing which can quite take its place.

The Blackwaller was never, like the ships of certain unscrupulous owners, a sort of Dotheboys Hall of the "Winder—go and clean it" stamp, in which lads whose parents had paid quite considerable premiums for them received no instruction whatever, and were to all intents and purposes nothing more than unpaid seamen, much like the "farm pupil" on some of the ranches out West, who finds himself acting as general "chore-boy" in return for his keep.

School ships such as the "Conway" and "Worcester" offer, of course, an excellent preparatory training, but it is one which was never intended to take the place of training afloat; and a boy who has

served his apprenticeship entirely in steam might very conceivably have no more notion of how to act in an emergency than the average passenger. And emergencies have a way of happening at sea still—yea, even the well-drilled, thoroughly reduced-to-order sea of this twentieth century ; for the sea is the sea to-day and always, incomprehensible, eternal, tremendous ; and he has his surprises to spring upon us now, just as he had when man first sailed forth in his coracle and proclaimed himself conqueror of the world of waters.

But—people may say—the Royal Navy has long ago abandoned its “stick-and-string” training, and apparently its efficiency has not suffered through the change. But then the Royal Navy is a very different matter. It is a highly specialized service in which every single man is a cog in a tremendous machine, a cog with its own work, its own varying function. It has no need for makeshifts, no call to adapt itself to poor tools or incompetent crews. The navigator has nothing to do but attend to his navigation. He is not required to superintend the stowing of a cargo or the taking of it out again, or to attend to such odd jobs of seamanship as have survived to the present time. Moreover, the Royal Naval training *does* provide something of a substitute for the discipline of the stick-and-string days. It is somebody’s business to teach alike the budding officer and the budding seaman, as it is, very often, nobody’s business to teach the modern cadet in steam.

The “brass-bounder,” on the other hand, even the most neglected “brass-bounder,” could not help learning something from his sea training. He learned to know the sea and the way of a ship in the midst of it, as no books could ever teach him. He learned

something about the ways of men ; and such knowledge is worth more in the long run, as a practical asset, than the subjects for examinations which may be " mugged up " with a few weeks' assistance from an expert crammer, by any chuckle-head under the sun.

But after all, this subject of the value of a training in sail has been so long and so often discussed that there is nothing to be gained by arguing it at length here. It remains yet to be seen whether the British people, in discarding the last remnants of such a training, have done wisely in the interests of the race at sea. Other nations of old seafaring traditions have thought it worth while to subsidize their remaining sailing tonnage solely for training purposes ; and it is a fact not without significance that the tremendous five-master " Kobenhavn " has been recently built for Denmark chiefly for that object.

It was not, as already remarked, every captain who took his duties very seriously as regarded the apprentices under his charge ; but some carried them out with characteristic thoroughness, both as to the spiritual and bodily welfare of their young charges.

There was one old Liverpool skipper who always used to have the boys in his room on Sunday afternoons and make them read a chapter from the Bible. On Saturday nights they had also to attend and receive each a dose of Epsom salts !

One of the boys had a pet monkey which always used to go in with him when the chapter reading was in progress, and squat under its master's chair. One Sunday it had followed its master in as usual, but stayed in the cabin unnoticed after the boys had left. The captain, his educational duties done, took off his spectacles and prepared for a short nap.

The next minute there was a loud yell, and the monkey came flying up out of the cabin with the skipper's spectacles perched on his nose and their owner in hot pursuit.

The monkey hopped nimbly aloft, part of the watch on deck pursuing him up the mainmast while the rest attended to the mizen. But he perched himself on the mizen royal stay where no one could follow him, and, the spectacles having disappeared from his nose, it seemed likely that they had fallen overboard during the chase. So it was decided to abandon the pursuit of the monkey and search for the glasses.

A vain hunt for them followed, the captain meanwhile bawling threats of death and destruction, directed impartially to the monkey and to those members of the ship's company who were unable to prevent their mirth from showing itself in their faces. After all, the spectacles were found in the junction of the lower mast-head and the foot of the topmast.

To return, however, to the Blackwall midshipman. His lot was really very similar to that of his contemporaries in the Royal Navy. He had to attend lessons in navigation, and learn practical seamanship from the bos'n. The mizen mast and its sails and yards were the midshipman's special charge, but he had none of the greasing and tarring down which in many sailing ships fell to the apprentices' lot, and even to that of second and third mates. He was also expected to keep a log of the voyage, and show it up at regular intervals to the commander.

Another of the midshipman's duties was the cleaning and oiling of the stand of arms always carried by Blackwallers so late as the 'seventies—a relic of the days when the ships of John Company's service were almost as much fighting craft as merchantmen. The



guns were also carried as kentledge long after their period of warlike usefulness was gone.

In ships like the Blackwallers they fared very well for those days so far as food was concerned. They had their own mess servants, very much as does a gunroom mess in the Navy, and their parents were expected to provide an adequate allowance as mess subscription. None the less the midshipman was by no means sumptuously fed ; and as for the ordinary apprentice, his hunger was so far from being satisfied by his legitimate " whack " that it was looked on as quite a pardonable form of enterprize to supplement the official menu by raiding the pantry and the cook's galley when opportunity offered.

. . . . .

I have before me at the present moment a bundle of faded old letters, written on that thin ruled paper which the Victorians knew as " foreign notepaper," and associated with news from their friends overseas in days when letters from abroad were more costly and infrequent affairs than is now the case.

Could one buy " foreign notepaper " now ? I doubt it. But how eagerly awaited they used to be, those old letters ! How they were read and re-read, wept over, laughed over, exclaimed over ! With what beating hearts and trembling hands they were opened and scanned, and then stored away, for their pale ink and yellowed sheets to remain when the eager eyes that read them were long since closed for ever !

These particular letters are those written by a midshipman making his first voyage in the Blackwaller " Dunbar Castle," and they give a very good idea of



the kind of impression his introduction to the midshipman's life made on the average youngster.

The first letter is dated "Gravesend," and although it is written in a gallant enough strain, one can glimpse through it something of the youthful writer's sensations of strangeness and home-sickness.

"My dearest Mamma" (it runs),

"I am all right on board and like my companions very well. I do not sleep with the midshipmen but with the apprentices, because there are too many in the berth. I have a much better bunk and like the apprentices much better. We stay the night at Gravesend, where I send this off."

Some of the Blackwallers, as this letter indicates, carried apprentices as well as midshipmen, the former paying a smaller premium or even none at all, and doing more work of a practical and perhaps less of an educational kind than the fully fledged midshipman.

Next comes a letter to "My dear Papa":

"As we have not yet sailed I am still able to write a letter to you. We are now lying off Greenhithe. It is blowing very hard. . . . They make us work awfully hard at washing the decks and lending a hand wherever it is wanted. I kept my watch last night. It rains awfully and waterproofs are in great requisition. We get very good food here. . . . I do not know when we sail. I have got a toothache. I do not know whether to have it out or not. I wish we could get started, as I don't like having the anticipation of sea-sickness so long before me. I was very nearly being sent aloft to do some sort of work, but another boy went instead. The man is just going with the letters, so good-bye."

How clearly one sees it all, reading between the lines! The flat Thames shore veiled by sheets of

rain, the grey, bitter March sky, the wet, shining slippery decks, the drip and patter of the drops from ropes and sails, and the melancholy expanse of dull muddy river water into which the rain came hissing down! And toothache on top of it all; to say nothing of the anticipation of sea-sickness! No wonder if just for a little time the young voyager felt that longing for home and its familiar faces that at some time, sooner or later, must come to every boy who obeys the call of the sea.

I remember once hearing from the captain of a Blue Funnel liner the story of his first voyage.

He didn't come of a seafaring family; his was one of those cases of the seagoing instinct, handed down, perhaps, from some remote ancestor, springing out for no apparent reason in a member of an essentially inland race.

He had been brought up in a remote Scottish hamlet, and the day when he left home to go to sea was one long succession of great and strange experiences.

First came a long drive in the dark, cold early morning to the station, followed by a journey of several hours in the train. He had never been in a train before. Then Glasgow—he had never been in a city before!—and at last the docks, with their thronging masts and funnels. He had never seen a ship before.

It was getting dark when they reached his own ship, and she was no more than a strange-smelling mystery of ropes and spars and lofty masts incredibly remote against the night sky.

There were bunks in the half-deck with beds in them made up—think of it!—with sheets. *Sheets*—in a windjammer! Well, it was a harmless deception enough, for the father—poor simple soul!—was able to take back a comforting tale to the anxious mother



ENTRANCE TO EAST INDIA DOCK, BLACKWALL



at home. "Aweel, it's gran' to think oor Jamie's a guid clean bed!" Needless to say the display of linen vanished after the first night, and the only sheets he saw again while he was in sail were the fore and main varieties.

The next evening they anchored off the Tail o' the Bank while the skipper went ashore to get a couple of men to replace two who had not turned up.

None of the crew had arrived except the cook, and he was a nigger. "That was the last and best, for I never saw a nigger before, unless it was a fellow with his face blacked at a village concert. I just couldn't believe he was real! There I sat with him in the galley, and the sight of his wool fascinated me so that I couldn't help putting out my hand to feel it.

"We sailed the next day, and it wasn't very long before I had to go aloft. It was beginning to blow pretty fresh, and the upper topsail had to be reefed. The ship was pretty heavy loaded, and she was laying over to it so that her yards had a good slant on them.

" 'Well', thinks I, 'this is a bit of a facer!' I give you my word—I don't mind owning it at this time of day—that I didn't like it at all! However, there was nothing for it, so up I went with the rest, and I didn't bother about the lubber's hole either. Of course, being the youngest and lightest, I had to go out to the yardarm. But I found when I got there I felt quite all right. I never troubled about going aloft again.

"For one thing, I never was sea-sick. That's a great thing for a boy going to sea. I'd heard a lot about this sea-sickness, of course, but it never bothered me. I just don't know what it feels like. And as for going aloft, it's the first step that counts. If a boy's a good head he's all right."

To return to our Blackwall midshipman. His next letters are from Sydney on May 11th ; all his troubles forgotten, he is now a full-fledged Sou' Spainer, bursting with nautical experiences and nautical expressions for the benefit of the less travelled members of his family.

" My dearest Mamma " (he writes),

" It gives me great pleasure to be able at last to inform you of some of the things that have taken place with me since I left you. We had a pretty fair passage out, all things considered, but we had a good deal of bad weather at the end. We were a long time in the Tropics, where we caught five sharks, one of which was eleven feet long. . . . We had a tremendous gale of wind—in fact, a real hurricane—off Cape Leeuwin, where one of our lifeboats was washed away and we split our mizen topsail and fore-topmast staysail. Refer to Price, as I suppose he is sailing with you this time " (in the writer's father's yacht), " and he will tell you that the loss of the staysail was a great disaster as we could not keep steady before the wind.

" A most remarkable thing happened in the Tropics this time. We were becalmed, and at dinner-time, as I came out from reading navigation with Mr. Selwyn and Still, I saw every one looking over the side. I jumped up and saw a large shark close to the ship. The hook was soon over and the shark caught ; he was eleven feet long. Well, they cut his head off, for the teeth are valuable, and let him go back into the water supposing him dead. He sank out of sight, and we were going away when we saw him rise again and begin swimming about, every now and then thrusting the stump where his head had been out of water. Well, this was very astonishing, to see a shark in



search of his head. He continued to swim round for more than twenty minutes, and then sank. This is the real truth."

"But"—adds the writer years afterwards—"I've never been able to get anybody to believe it!"

"We used," the letter continues, "to have a hymn class amongst the boys, got up by Mr. Selwyn and Still. Miss Portman played a little harmonium. We used also to sing catches. We had services and hymns every Sunday and I and three others were selected as choir."

A letter written at the same time to a younger sister is copiously interlarded with maritime expressions:

"The time has at last arrived that I should heave-to, or rather bring myself to anchor, and open you a twister, *alias* a cuffer, *alias* a yarn, *alias* a letter. We had a very fair passage out and the bull got out all safe" (presumably a stock animal), "so did the passengers. Well, my hearty, how does the world treat you now? If — looks rather down at the bows you must sing out, 'More wind in your jib, old son,' and if he takes no notice tell him to spring his luff and get out of your north-east course or you'll carry away his flying jibboom. One of the sheep we brought out with us as provisions had a lamb, which was kept as a pet, but just as we got near Sydney they got hard up for provisions; so they killed the sheep, and the lamb stuffed himself so full of potato parings that he also died shortly."

A letter to a brother gives a fuller account of the big blow off Cape Leeuwin previously mentioned:

"We had a fair passage out, but we had one tremendous gale off Cape Leeuwin of which I will try to give you some idea.

"It began to blow at about 2 a.m. in my watch

below, and at four we furled the mainsail. It was then of course my watch on deck. I had to go to the lee wheel as it was then blowing rather stiff. At five o'clock a squall came on us all in a moment which all but laid us on our beam-ends. It was all we could do to keep our feet, but we kept her dead before it with only the topsail set. The captain sung out to reef the topsail, but could not be heard for the roaring of the wind and sea ; in fact, you have no idea of the scene—masts bending, blocks rattling, everything not made fast fetching away to leeward, seas sweeping the decks sometimes, but not often, for she behaved like a duck. I was stationed at the lee helm helping the man to heave on the wheel when required.

“ Well, we commenced to reef the topsails, all hands having been called, when another calamity occurred. The lamps for the compass would not burn, it blew so hard ; and when we managed them at last and began to collect ourselves and look about, and I was holding to the wheel like a Briton to prevent falling down, we heard an awful crash and there was the mizen topsail sheet gone and the sail gone to ribbons. We got it furled and our watch went below, as it was now just seven.

“ No sooner were we settled to tea than she broached to and shipped a sea which took us fore and aft and filled the decks. Out comes the carpenter. ‘ Knock out the ports,’ he says. The men not knowing what he says, they sing out ‘ Lower the boats,’ and rush about in wild confusion, I with my pannikin in hand half-full of tea and half salt water. The decks were clear at last and by this time it was near 8 o'clock. It blew the same, only harder, all night, and we lost a lifeboat and the foretopmast staysail.”

The old “ Dunbar Castle,” in which this first voyage

was made, was the last ship ever built for that once-famous shipowner, Duncan Dunbar. She was built in 1868, two years before he died, and on the dispersal of his fleet the "Dunbar Castle" passed under the flag of Messrs. Devitt & Moore. She was a small ship even for a Blackwaller (they seldom ran to size), only 925 tons, and she was built by Laing of Sunderland, not, like so many of the Dunbar ships, at Moulmein. She was one of the last ships to carry a single topsail at the mizen—the same sail the mishap to which is mentioned in one of the letters just quoted. She had formerly in all probability carried single topsails on all three masts, those on the fore and main having been replaced by double sails, the mizen for some reason being left as it was.

She had a very rough time on her return passage, all her bulwarks being carried away and the deck-house loosened from its holds when she was hove-to off the Horn.

Her commander at this time was Captain David B. Carvosso, a rare stickler for discipline, but at heart one of the kindest and gentlest of men, who could remember in the midst of his own anxieties to send a young first voyage midshipman into the saloon in heavy weather, saying that he was too small to be on deck. He was known on one occasion to brave a mob of shrieking female emigrants out for blood, before whom the ship's doctor had fled affrighted, and cow them into submission by threatening to have the hose turned upon them. Nor was he afraid to tell his owners when, through the fault of the "ship's husband" in Sydney, the "Dunbar Castle" was sent home so heavily loaded that the wonder was she ever finished the voyage, that he would not consent to sail in her again under such conditions.

She made two voyages, between 1872 and 1876, from Sydney to Ceylon by way of Torres Strait, and the armament, which in accordance with old Blackwall tradition she still carried, received special attention from the midshipmen in whose special charge it was, with an eye to the possibility of shipwreck on the New Guinea coast among cannibals and head-hunters, for in these days the North Australian coast was by no means thoroughly charted.

She sailed for many years in the Australian trade, and it was the boys of the "Dunbar Castle" who gave Sydney folk a good laugh by upsetting into the harbour a dozen or so of the little "sentry boxes" for tally clerks around the Circular Quay.

In 1880 she was converted into a barque, having carried her single mizen topsail right up to that time. A little later she was sold to the Norwegians, and in 1901 was converted into a coal hulk at Gibraltar, where she is—or was a very few years ago—still afloat.

It is one of the saddest fates, surely, for a fine old sailing ship to be thus bound in ignominious slavery to the very ships which have driven her and her kind from the seas. But I don't know—it may have its compensations after all. Old sailors like to be "among shipping." Perhaps old ships are the same. There is the sea that never changes. There are the ships that bring their cargoes and their tidings from the ports she knew. And still, once in a way, there comes a square-rigger, old, leaky, sold foreign like herself, with her remnant of departed beauty, her wonder, her dream, her many memories of the sea.

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## CHAPTER V

### I. THE CLIPPER SHIP "THERMOPYLAE"

"CHINA TEA!" What a lot of different things that phrase suggests—or rather did suggest once upon a time, for nowadays it doesn't mean much to the majority of people, except perhaps that the doctor recommends it to dyspeptics, and that if you are not dyspeptic you secretly think it rather a tasteless brew unless you happen to be one of those rare folk who genuinely like it.

But it means quite a number of other things all the same. It means, for example, Victorian drawing-rooms where discreet and Cranfordian ladies in crinolines or camel-like bustles sipped their "tay" from delicate eggshell china. It means old-fashioned grocers' shops—like Twining's in the Strand—with twisted sticks of barley sugar and "hundreds and thousands" in glass bottles, and assistants with side-whiskers attending to the requirements of thrifty housewives of the Jane Austen period.

It means old warehouses in the streets leading down to the river—and the East India House still standing—and London Docks a forest of tall masts and spreading spars.

It means the old Pagoda Anchorage at Foochow thronged with the fairest and fleetest ships mankind ever planned so long as he relied on the winds of God to carry him and his merchandise over-seas. It means the hong a-bustle with life and activity, the river



busy with harbour craft and lighters, the ceaseless drub of the mallets as the little "catty-boxes" of tea are fitted into place by the skilful Chinese stevedores.

It means such an assemblage of lovely ships as the world has never seen—unless indeed it were in the harbours of the Antipodes and in the London River when the Australian wool trade was at its zenith. There were gathered together the vessels whose names are still classics among sailormen. There were seen the houseflags, which have for the most part passed away, of the great shipping houses whose fleets drove the first furrows in the vast field of British commercial supremacy. There were the beautiful "Sir Lancelot," the "Ariel," worthy of that fairy name, the sisters, "Taeping" and "Taitsing," the swift "Lothair," and "Hallowe'en"—a host of noble ships, nobly named, in which the height of the shipbuilder's skill and the finest of seamanship met in a rare conjunction to bring forth wonders of speed and endurance.

And of all that fleet of swift and lovely ships, none was perhaps ever built more lovely and more swift than the famous clipper "Thermopylae."

It was not alone that she made astonishing passages. It was not alone that she achieved more than one record never beaten during the age of sail. There was in her some secret quality which moved the seaman's heart with an emotion of apprehended beauty—so that, speaking of her years afterwards, he seems to think of her as of a thing somehow unearthly, lighting up the day's work with an almost visionary splendour.

And this glamour is not wholly of the past. Men felt it while she was still of to-day. It is recorded of her that once, in Australian waters, she left Melbourne in company with H.M.S. "Charybdis." She gave the



Queen's ship her dust as usual ; and as she dropped astern her commander signalled to the departing clipper :

" Good-bye ! You are too much for us—you are the finest model of a ship I ever saw—it does my heart good to look at you ! "

The strange thing is that, considering her fame among her contemporaries, so scanty a record of her has survived, especially as regards her early days. Her first skipper, Kemball, must have been, I fancy, a sailor of the reserved type, not given to talking about his ship or himself. And it is exceptionally hard to find people who in those years knew her at first hand.

I have yet to come across anybody who served his time in the " Thermopylae." Once I met, quite by chance, a man who had been either second or third mate of her, I forget which. He was second mate of a coaster when I came across him : a grizzled, rather peevish, perhaps a disappointed man. Unexpectedly he blurted out that he had sailed in the " Thermopylae." I don't know whether he cared to speak about it. Life had not, I fancy, handed him out much of a prize in her lottery. He was in the old ship in Captain Allan's time, so far as I remember ; and they had hoped to be at home for Christmas, but a terrible blizzard sprung up and kept them beating about the Channel for a fortnight.

And of course I have met plenty of people who have seen her—picking her way daintily as a deer among the islands of the China Sea, or queening it over the surrounding shipping in the harbours of Australia, or moving across the dead calm waters of Sydney Harbour, with a faint breath of air stirring away up among her royals sending her along as if by magic. And always

in their memories there is that sense of beauty, catching the breath, moving the heart, which the ship in her perfection can bring as surely as the poet's song or the artist's picture.

. . . . .

She was built—like most of the sailing fleet of the Aberdeen White Star Line—by Hood of Aberdeen, among whose creations were the “Miltiades,” the “Cimba,” the wonderful “Patriarch,” the lovely “Salamis” (“a flower of a ship,” so I have heard an old sailor, who had been one of her officers, call her), and the “Samuel Plimsoll.” She was a composite ship, like the “Cutty Sark,” with a greenheart hull and teakwood upper works; and a brass bulwark ran the whole length of the ship, which no doubt needed plenty of polishing to keep it up to the Aberdeen standard.

A writer in the “English Illustrated Magazine” in October, 1892, gives a summary of her achievements, which is on the whole fairly correct.

“It is not” (he says) “too much to claim for the “Thermopylae” the honour of being the swiftest sailing-ship afloat. That is to say, she can show the greatest twenty-four hours’ run that has ever been made by any craft depending upon the wind as a motive power. . . . Her first voyage was from London to Melbourne. Starting in November, 1868, she made the fastest journey between those places that had ever been accomplished—sixty days from berth to berth.” (This should read “pilot to pilot”.) “This was looked upon at the time as a quite exceptional achievement, due largely to accident, and it was never supposed that the ship could maintain the reputation

she had won upon this voyage. But the next trip she made confirmed her remarkable qualities, for she accomplished the same passage within a few hours of the exact time her maiden run had occupied. The log of her first trip is preserved in Lindsay's 'History of Shipping,' and is a real curiosity as a record of rapid sailing. . . . But it was whilst running down her easting between the Cape and Australia that she displayed her wonderful capabilities. On January 3, 1870, with the wind strong abeam, she ran by the log, confirmed afterwards by observations, 330 knots, or 380 statute miles! Allowing even a discount of ten miles off this total for time gained by her in great circle sailing, she would still be able to show an average of  $15\frac{1}{2}$  miles an hour, which is certainly a feat that no sailing ship, either before or since, has ever exceeded." (The writer forgets the "Lightning's" 430 miles here.) "Nor is this all, for on ten days at least of the sixty which she occupied on her passage, the average run amounted to upwards of 350 miles in the twenty-four hours, and in one week, between December 30th and January 5th, she covered a distance of about 2,000 land miles."

As a matter of fact, this writer is rather inclined to over-estimate the "Thermopylae's" achievement on her maiden voyage, for her abstract log shows her longest day's run to have been 330 miles, and on nine days only did she exceed 300 miles. But her exploits need no exaggeration. She made more than one "record"—for what records are worth—which have, I believe, never been beaten. Again on her maiden trip, she was only twenty-eight days from Newcastle, N.S.W. to Shanghai, by way of the Straits of Sunda: and on another occasion—I have not the exact date—she was seventeen days from Sydney to the Horn,

whereas very fast ships considered that they had done well to run the same distance in twenty-one.

A noticeable point about "Thermopylae's" rig, as shown in the pictures of her which survive, was the squareness of her rig as compared with the majority of the ships in the China trade. It is this point which gives her so much more modern an appearance than such ships as the "Ariel," "Sir Lancelot," and the lofty "Norman Court."

She was an out-and-out tea clipper in the lines of her hull. In the forehold, standing some fifteen feet aft, one could easily touch both sides of the ship with extended hands, and the same held good at the stern. The saying was that if anyone pressed a Malacca cane along her side at any point the cane would have to bend, as there was not a straight line in her. Standing for'ard, a man told me who had sailed in her, you had to put a foot against each side of the hull in order to stand upright.

She left the stocks in August, 1868, and started forth on her voyage round the world, breaking records as she went. At the outset she lost a seaman, one Peter Johnson, overboard. Perhaps he was the sacrifice the jealous sea demanded.

Captain Kemball, who was her first commander, came to her from another tea clipper, "Yangtze." In his early days he had been captain of a coasting cutter in Australia. He commanded the "Thermopylae" for several years, and only left her to take over the Aberdeen Line's new iron clipper, the flagship of the fleet, "Aristides."

She was, of course, painted "Aberdeen green," and was sometimes in her later years known as the "Bottle-green Ship." The green and gold, or yellow, stripe were the distinctive colours of the line, and the steamers

of the company still keep up the tradition. Her lower masts, yardarms, figure-head (of Leonidas the Spartan), bowsprit and blocks were white ; and at her main truck glittered the arrogant golden cock which aroused the indignation of her rivals who considered that she had not yet earned the right to "crow."

In point of fact, neither the "Thermopylae" nor her great rival "Cutty Sark" ever did actually win the tea race from China. Both were built when the China tea fleet was already on the wane, and both spent the greater part of their career on the Australian run. Nor were they ever able to make a positive race of it, so as definitely to establish the superiority of one over the other. The only occasion when they came near to doing so was that of their race home from Shanghai in 1872, and that, as will presently be seen, ended without a real decision either way.

Both vessels left Shanghai the same day (June 21st), but were delayed for some time by fog at the start. Two days out, "Cutty Sark's" foretopgallant sail was split by a gale. Going down the China Sea the two ships were constantly in sight of each other, first one, then the other, having a slight advantage. At Anjer "Thermopylae" was leading by a little, but a few days later a spell of the strong breezes in which "Cutty Sark" was always at her best took her to the front, and a fortnight later she had established a good lead over the Aberdeen champion.

The race, however, was destined never to be really finished. In latitude 34 S. a strong westerly gale, which had already split several of the "Cutty Sark's" sails, carried away her rudder, and her chance of winning the great contest vanished at once. A horse cannot win the Derby with a loose plate or a patched-up bridle.



Whether the "Cutty Sark" would actually have been the winner had all gone well with her can never positively be proved. Some experts hold that she must have been; on the other hand, it is quite possible that "Thermopylae's" unsurpassed quality of working to windward might have kept her in the lead even had her opponent not been crippled. "Cutty Sark" certainly never lowered "Thermopylae's" record to Australia, nor do I think she ever matched her seventeen days to the Horn.

The general opinion among sailors seems undoubtedly to be that the "Thermopylae" at her best was, if anything, the faster ship of the two. The old pilots about Anjer and Java Head used to speak of her quite recently as the better ship; and members of her old crew used to tell, after they had followed her into her new sphere, of three unbroken records from London to Melbourne of fifty-nine, sixty-one, and sixty-three days, presumably land to land. These may be to some extent shellback yarns; but the fact remains that "Cutty Sark's" nearest approach to "Thermopylae's" best London to Melbourne passages was in 1877-78, when she went out in sixty-eight days.

Sixteen days from the Lizard to the Line is another of "Thermopylae's" records, which so far as I know remains unbeaten.

Mr. Basil Lubbock in his admirable book on "The China Clippers" draws the conclusion that "Cutty Sark" was the better ship with the wind aft, and "Thermopylae" on a wind. He also considers "Cutty Sark" to have been the better ship in the Australian trade, the "Thermopylae" on the China run. But surely a ship which is capable of running in the Roaring Forties 305, 310, 312, 330, and 326 miles in twenty-four hours on five consecutive days cannot be



said not to be in her element in the Australian trade.

"Thermopylae" was sold in 1889 to Mr. Robert Reford of Montreal, to whom I am indebted for some most interesting information regarding the famous clipper's later years.

"Though I was very fond of the old ship," says Mr. Reford, "she was an awful spendthrift. It is reported that on her first voyage, when she arrived in London with a cargo of tea, the merchants of London fed the crew on champagne for a week, and this extravagance seems to have become a sort of tradition with her."

She sailed the first time under her new ownership from Cardiff to Singapore with a cargo of coal. The night before sailing the captain gave a champagne supper on board, and discovered the following morning that one of his guests had absent-mindedly taken his gold watch with him! He may have been a sadder, but he certainly was not a wiser man in consequence, for as soon as the ship arrived in Singapore he set to work to run up big bills with the *comprador* at that place, traded one of the ship's lifeboats for a jolly boat, disposed of her stunsail gear, and sold the old Tower muskets which still remained on board as a relic of precautions against pirates in the China Sea. He was just starting in to realize on the ship's stores when the owner's agents at Singapore intervened, or he would no doubt have finished up by selling the ship!

The captain who was appointed in his place turned out to be a black sheep of much the same stamp, and on the "Thermopylae's" arrival in Victoria the crew refused point-blank to go to sea with him again.

But the British seaman is an incomprehensible being. When the crew found that the skipper and the

mate were stranded they had a tarpaulin muster to pay their first-class passages down to Frisco. The two reprobates sold the tickets and went on the spree again with the money, and ultimately they were shipped home, together with the crew, as "distressed British seamen."

Mr. Reford asked the sailors at the time why they put themselves out of the way to help the Old Man, when he had treated them so badly that they had refused to sail with him again.

Their reply was that although "he was a durned bad skipper, he was a fine seaman"; when the weather was fine he was nearly always drunk, but when the ship encountered a typhoon he stood by the mizen mast with an axe, ready to cut away if it came to the worst, and they had on that account a great respect for him!

The "Thermopylae" had now a new captain and a new crew—the former a man of a very different kind from his two immediate predecessors.

The new skipper's name was Winchester. He was a "blue nose," than whom no finer seaman can be found the world over.

It was just at this time that the dispute was in progress between the Canadian and the United States authorities with regard to sealing rights on the Pribyloff Islands, which finally resulted in the practical extinction of the British Columbian sealing fleet and a great amount of loss and suffering among the captains and crews, many of whom owned their schooners.

The United States authorities had captured a schooner called the "Black Diamond," whose master, McLean, was a very well-known character along the coast, and provided Jack London with a model for the hero of his novel "The Sea Wolf." The "Black

Diamond" sailed into Victoria, prize crew and all, and McLean then invited the Americans to walk ashore. This was of course an act of open defiance which resulted in the sealing schooners being chased back into Victoria whenever they showed themselves outside Cape Flattery.

But it is an ill wind that blows nobody good. Here was Captain Winchester's opportunity to secure a good crew for his new ship. That they would probably be hard cases he knew quite well; but a "blue nose" skipper is the last man to worry his head about hard cases.

Captain Winchester found this crew the finest he had ever sailed with. They were all young men from the sealing schooners, many of them of Shetland or Hebridean blood. They had never sailed in a square-rigged ship before, but they soon got accustomed to the work, and—as no born seaman could help doing—they loved the old ship and gloried in her beauty and her prowess.

When Captain Winchester joined the ship first he had a very handsome set of Dundreary whiskers, of which he was very proud, but when he returned to Victoria the next time they were gone. The explanation of their disappearance was as follows:

They had kept having bad weather, one gale on the top of another, until at last the crew came aft in a body, and gravely suggested that it was the Old Man's whiskers that were causing all the disturbance, consequently they would be much obliged if he would cut them off.

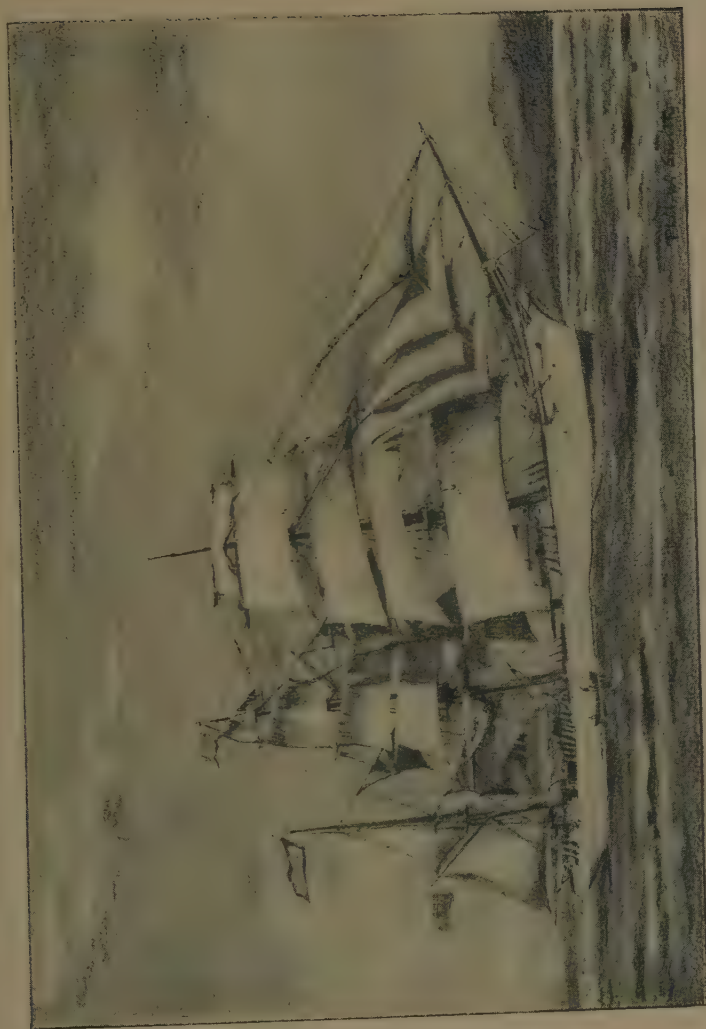
Now it must have taken an unusually bold man or body of men to approach a skipper—and above all a "blue nose" skipper—with an invitation to shave his whiskers. But either Captain Winchester and his

crew were on such excellent terms that, like Captain Reece of the "Mantelpiece," he considered "it was his duty, and he did," or possibly he thought they really meant business, and would trim his "face fungus" for him if he cut up nasty about it; or, again, he may have agreed with them as to the unfortunate effect of whiskers on the weather. At any rate, cut off the offending ornaments he did. I don't know if the desired improvement in weather conditions followed.

At this time the "Thermopylae" was barque-rigged, but Mr. Reford states that the change made very little difference to her speed. Her sail plan had already been cut down twice while she was in the Australian Service. Captain Marshall, of the C.P.R. liner "Empress of India," whose pretty clipper bow with its bust of Queen Victoria was so familiar a sight in Victoria Harbour some years ago, remembers the old ship staying with him for three days on the passage over from Yokohama, and that when his own ship was making over sixteen knots.

It was while she was trading to Victoria that the "Thermopylae" very nearly repeated one of her performances at Sydney some years before, namely, sailing over the tow-boat, and indeed she would have done so had the tug on this occasion not been made fast to the ship. The skipper of the tug had been warned that he might find the "Thermopylae" a ticklish ship to handle, but he laughed the suggestion to scorn, retorting that he could tow a big full-rigged ship down off Cape Flattery at twelve knots in the teeth of a gale of wind.

However, as it happened, he held on a bit too long, and when he rang off his engines and put the tug full speed astern the "Thermopylae" went gaily ahead



"THERMOPYLAE" OFF VICTORIA HARBOUR





as if nothing had happened, until she was brought up short by the fluke of her anchor catching one of the wharf piles. The impact ripped up the fo'c'sle, and the anchor finally crashed down on the "Thermopylae's" deck, the tug-boat's owners having to make good the damage amounting to about 750 dollars.

But the "Thermopylae's" day of usefulness was over. She was not a paying proposition for cargoes other than tea or wool. It took four hundred tons of ballast to make her stand up, and her deadweight capacity was barely a thousand. Hence it became increasingly difficult to get a cargo suitable for her, and on her last voyage under the British flag she loaded Oregon pine from Portland for Leith, and had to have bow ports cut in her beautiful hull in order to stow it.

On her first voyage after Messrs. Thompson sold her, the crew signed on at Cardiff complained that the fo'c'sle was too small. At that time the "Thermopylae" carried a crew of about thirty, whereas the fo'c'sle had been accounted roomy enough for sixty-four in the days of the China tea trade.

There were many fine old ships sailing from Victoria in those days. The Pacific coast was the last refuge of the windjammer. There might be seen occasionally the lovely little "Titania," which then belonged to the Hudson Bay Company, and could still make the run from London to Victoria in the teeth of the stormy westerlies in ninety to a hundred days. Another old acquaintance of the "Thermopylae" in the China trade, the Chilean-owned "Lothair," also probably crossed her hawse in the Pacific more than once; while Heap's old wool clipper "Antiope" was owned in Victoria at the same time.

In 1895 the "Thermopylae" was sold to the

Portuguese Government, who converted her into a training ship for boys under the name of "Pedro Nunes," and stationed her in the Tagus. Whether she ever went to sea afterwards I cannot say, but I should rather think not, and it was probably this period of inactivity which resulted in her being pronounced unfit for service in 1907. The Portuguese authorities towed her out to sea and sank her by gunfire—a worthy funeral for so fine a ship.

Probably had her later career been as active as that of the "Cutty Sark," the "Thermopylae" would have been afloat still. Ships, like their masters, thrive on hard work.

The only relic of her which remains is her old foghorn, with the crest of the Aberdeen White Star Line in the centre, above it the motto, "Clamavi et Clamabo," and beneath "Vox et praeterea nihil."

## II. THE CLIPPER "CUTTY SARK"

The clipper ship "Cutty Sark"—built, like the "Thermopylae," in the later years of the China tea fleet, and, like her, better known in the Australian trade—occupies a unique position among the famous ships of the days of sail.

In the first place, she is nearly the only sailing ship whose name is known to anything approaching a considerable proportion of people other than those keenly interested in shipping. Many of those to whose minds such names as "Thermopylae," "Lightning," "Sobraon," "Marco Polo," "Torrens," and "Samuel Plimsoll" convey no meaning at all, who do not know a brace from a backstay, or a spanker

gaff from a jibboom, have gathered from a more or less desultory perusal of newspaper articles that the "Cutty Sark" is a ship endowed with a kind of magical and miraculous turn of speed. And, like most such popular impressions, it contains a modicum of fact with a great deal of misapprehension.

The truth of the matter is that the "Cutty Sark" has had the good—or bad—luck, whichever way you look at it, to outlast all or nearly all her contemporaries. Up to a few years ago, the general public took no interest whatever in China clippers. They didn't care a tinker's button if the whole lot were thrown on the scrap-heap. Then, suddenly, there began to be a vogue for such things, and they made the amazing discovery that there was actually one still afloat. People wrote articles about the "Cutty Sark" and made photographs and sketches of her. They went to see her whenever she was in the Docks: and gradually there grew up a sort of "Cutty Sark" legend which is no more true than most such popular misconceptions.

"Cutty Sark" was one of the few survivors from the period when ships were being built for speed and for nothing but speed, in an age when cargo capacity was being increasingly taken into consideration by the builders and designers of ships. Again, it must be borne in mind that she was a wooden, or rather a composite, ship, and that the majority of the iron clippers which were built for speed were several years old and therefore past their prime when "Cutty Sark" competed with them. A wooden ship never deteriorated with time as an iron or steel one does; and the "Cutty Sark's" greenheart and teak had not gone off much in fifty years when I saw her in Surrey Docks in November, 1922. She was only in the tea trade for

three voyages, and of those none were under a hundred days. She never made such records in that trade as did the "Thermopylae," or the "Titania," or the "Ariel," or the iron "Hallowe'en." Against most of the famous China ships she was never matched at all. They were before her time.

In the Australian trade she holds the best average for the years between 1874 and 1880, seventy-three and a quarter days, though she never beat "Thermopylae's" two first runs out to the Colonies in 1868 and 1869. She also made some astonishing daily runs in the Forties, amongst them one of 363 knots; and, although many seamen hold that all these phenomenal records must take into account such matters as currents, and that no ship ever built could make eighteen or nineteen knots without some such extraneous factor, the performance is a sufficiently noteworthy one.

Comparisons are odious things after all. That much-vexed and never-to-be-really-settled question of "the fastest ship in the world" has been fully discussed elsewhere in these pages. The "Cutty Sark" need not rely for her fame upon her claim to that elusive honour. She is a great little ship, a wonderful little ship. And what ship can desire a higher tribute?

One point to be borne in mind is that she was remarkably fortunate in her captains. Captain Moodie, who had her in the China trade, was a tremendous driver, and got every possible ounce out of her; and Captain Woodget, who had her in her Australian days, was if possible a more daring seaman still. Both have served her well from the point of view of preserving her history. Captain Moodie died quite recently when over ninety years old. He loved his old ship—

he had, I believe, some say in her design—and delighted to sing her praises and recount her exploits.

Captain Woodget, who is still "going strong," is just as enthusiastic on the subject of the little clipper, and has preserved ample records of her career under his mastership.

Probably no ship has ever been able to show a more complete history. She has even achieved the honour of having a whole book by that indefatigable delver in nautical records, Mr. Basil Lubbock, devoted to her own story, which will no doubt have appeared by the time these words are published; and partly for that reason it is not proposed here to do more than touch upon some few of the more striking points in her career.

She was built in 1869, a year later than the "Thermopylae," to the designs of Messrs. Scott & Linton, of Dumbarton. Her descent from an old French frigate by way of the old Indian marine paddle-wheeler "Punjaub," later Willis's "The Tweed" (the definite article is part of the name, please!) is too well known to require further comment.

Captain John Willis, for whom she was built, was one of the real type of "one man" shipowners. An old bachelor to the day of his death, he was a very well-known "character," of whom many stories used to be told.

In his house at Richmond there was an inscription in Latin over the kitchen range which used to be a puzzle to a good many people. Translated, it simply meant, "God sends the Food, but the Devil sends the Cooks!"

He had been a sailor himself in his young days, although he always used to persuade boys going to sea for the first time to change their minds; and he



invariably sported the white hat which was *de rigueur* among shipmasters ashore.

During his last illness he somewhat shocked a parson who had called to offer his spiritual ministrations by recounting with much gusto a story of his youth, when he commanded a brig sailing to the West Indies.

He had as a passenger a new Bishop of Demerara, and the dignitary, who was making his first ocean voyage, was of course greatly interested in everything that went on about him.

The ship anchored for a time in the Downs, and, hearing Captain Willis remark at dinner that it looked as if there might be enough wind for her to get under way during the morning watch, the Bishop observed :

" Really ! I trust you will let me know so that I may come on deck and see it done. ' Weighing the anchor '—what a wonderful thought that is ! The subject of so many helpful and inspiring metaphors. . . . I must certainly make a point of being present."

" Tut-tut ! Nothing of the kind ! " said Captain Willis hastily. " Stay in bed and be comfortable, Bishop ! I wish I could do the same, that's all ! Nothing to see, I assure you—nothing whatever ! "

However, the Bishop's curiosity was not to be so easily allayed. He went to his cabin, but not to sleep ; and—hearing a great deal of noise and shouting on deck in the small hours—he huddled on some clothes and issued forth to see what was toward.

The first thing of which he became aware was a flood of the most profane language of which he had ever dreamed. The men were all strung out along the yard shaking loose the gaskets, and on deck stood the bos'n, his legs planted wide and his hands to his mouth,



pouring forth a string of oaths with an occasional aside, as follows :

" —, —, —, ye — sons o' sojers (May the Lord 'ave mercy on me !), —, —, —, there (I 'ope I'll be forgiven !). Oh, Lord forgive me, ye —, —, —," and so on *ad infinitum*.

The Bishop was profoundly shocked. Stepping forward, as soon as he had sufficiently recovered from his astonishment, he laid an admonitory hand on the bos'n's arm.

" My good man," he said, " are you not ashamed to utter such terrible blasphemies, and, what is worse, to couple them with references to the Almighty ? "

The bos'n paused for a moment.

" That's all right, your reverence, that's all right, must clean up as I go along ! " and he resumed his interrupted discourse.

" —, —, — (Oh, Lord, forgive me !). . . . "

And all the sympathy the Bishop got from Captain Willis was :

" Well, didn't I tell you to stay in your cabin ? "

. . . . .

The outstanding feature of the "Cutty Sark's" China phase was her race with the "Thermopylae," already described, which had such an unsatisfactory result owing to the loss of her rudder. All through Captain Moodie's mastership she had very bad luck both as regards weather and in losing sails and spars. I have heard it said that her original fitting out aloft left a good deal to be desired, and that among other things cast iron was used in places where it should have been wrought, but whether that was actually the case or not it is impossible to say with any certainty.

After Captain Moodie left her to go into steam she had a succession of commanders, under one of whom, Captain Tiptaft, she made her best passage to Australia (sixty-eight days).

Captain Woodget took command of her in 1885, and had her as long as she remained under the British flag.

Captain John Willis was very fond of making "finds," both in the way of ships and skippers, and Captain Woodget was one of the best. He had been mate for several years in one of John Allan's ships, but it was John Willis who gave him his first command—a very different stamp of ship from the "Cutty Sark." This was the old "Coldstream," a Moulmein built Blackwaller of 750 tons, which Captain John bought from Green's. She was a real old stager, built in 1845, every scrap of her teak, with quarter galleries and great square glass stern-ports.

The old ship had never done more than eight or nine knots in her life, but her new skipper managed to knock some good work—two hundred and fifty miles a day and thereabouts—out of her during the two voyages he had her. The second of these lasted all but three years—Madras, Tuticorin, Cochin, over to Natal with coolies, the Mauritius and home; and she was never alongside a quay the whole time. At last she loaded and sailed for home, but she had not been many days at sea before she started to leak.

She made a steady fourteen inches of water an hour, no more, no less, whatever the weather might be. Naturally the crew got a bit worried about it, for it was nothing but pump, pump, pump, the whole time. So when the Cape was sighted they came aft in a body and asked the captain to put into Cape Town, as they would not work any longer.

By this time, however, he had rigged a water-wheel over the side, which kept the ship pumped out splendidly, so he replied: "All right, do as you like! The ship can get along without you."

The water-wheel lasted until Saint Helena was passed, and when the ship touched at that island for provisions the men had talked it over among themselves and come to the conclusion that they would go on with the old barkey after all. The three years' payroll was beginning to draw near, and the prospect of being landed at Saint Helena without any money to wait for a ship did not seem so attractive at close quarters. Accordingly, when a Board of Trade official came on board and asked if there were any complaints they were all as mum as mice, and the old "Coldstream" rolled on her way once more.

Saint Helena was not far behind before the water-wheel came to grief, and the captain had almost decided to put back to the Cape after all. In fact, he would have done if he had not happened to overhear some grumbling among the men, which put his back up so that he determined to carry on. The next device he evolved was a pump windmill, Baltic fashion, and with its aid he brought her safely into port, when old Captain Willis did nothing but grumble because he said it spoiled the look of his ship!

A shore gang took her over as soon as the crew left and continued to pump to keep her afloat in the dock. When she was dry docked it was found that all the caulking was out of one of her seams for about a couple of feet, and when this was put in she lay in the dock for four months and kept as dry as a bone.

To add to his troubles on this passage, Captain Woodget signed on a new mate at St. Helena who took to his bunk a few days after leaving the island, and

not all the most fearsome resources of the ship's medicine chest could induce him to budge. There he stopped for the whole of the ninety days: turning up smiling at the end of it for his pay.

After that she went out to the Brass River as a hulk, in charge of a crew of runners. Whether she ever got there or not I do not know.

Captain Woodget drove the "Cutty" for all she was worth as long as he had her, and nobly she responded to the calls that were made upon her. He used to walk fore and aft of the poop, whistling always the same tune without beginning or end, and if he had any Russian Finns among his crew they no doubt thought he was whistling for a wind, for the more it blew the more he whistled. He certainly seemed to revel in wind, and when he went below, leaving instructions to the officers of the watch not to take any sail off her, that officer would sometimes begin to feel a little worried and instruct someone to call the captain. Then, as likely as not, up would come the skipper, give a sniff out of the chart-room door to leeward, remark: "Mister! I thought I told you to call me if there was *more* wind!"—and disappear to renew his interrupted slumbers.

She had her masts and yards cut down considerably more than once; in fact, when Captain Woodget had her eight feet of her original mainmast could be seen 'tween decks, the mast having been lowered below the level of the deck to shorten it. Her speed did not seem to suffer in consequence, another proof of the fact that these fast clippers owed their capabilities to the lines of their hulls rather than to their sail plan.

Those old timbers of hers could tell many and many a tale if they could speak. They could tell, perhaps,

about the occasion when she raced the P. & O. mail steamer "Britannia" from Cape Gabo to Sydney. A fresh breeze sprang up, and away she romped, getting into port several hours ahead of the mail-boat. A squall split her mainroyal to ribbons, but another had to be bent, although she was within an hour or two of reaching port.

The captain of the "Britannia" said afterwards that when his chief officer came to him and reported, "A sailing vessel coming up astern, sir," he replied, "Nonsense, man! You must be dreaming!" And it was not until he came on deck himself that he could believe it.

At one time or another she was in company with most of the noted ships of her day, and she seldom came off badly in these encounters.

Her history was not without its sinister side. There is a certain grim story, for instance, which started one dark night in the China Seas and ended years later in a sordid drinking-den of Tiger Bay.

She has known peace and she has known war. She braved German cruisers and German submarines, carrying mealies for the allied armies, and once during this time she was dismasted in a cyclone in the Indian Ocean, but managed to limp into Delagoa Bay and thence to Cape Town for repairs. The Armistice found her with a cargo of cocoa for Germany, but the cocoa could not be delivered and went bad on board.

I saw her in Surrey Docks in 1922, very shabby and forlorn-looking. She had recently had a severe dusting on the way over from Brazil with a cargo of, I think, linseed, and her figure-head had suffered some damage. This figure-head, of course, represents the witch "Nannie" in Burns's poem "Tam o' Shanter," and I have been told that in the old days when she came



into port she always used to have a bunch of horse-hair in her outstretched hand.

Captain Woodget had her for ten years, and during the whole of that time she was in the Australian trade, but for one voyage over to Shanghai in 1886.

That was shortly after the great earthquake when Cockatoo Island disappeared, and Anjer was flooded by a tidal wave, and passing down Anjer Straits the "Cutty Sark" had a curious experience.

The captain saw ahead of the ship what appeared to be a long shoal or sandbank, no such obstacle, however, being shown on the chart. On a closer view it proved to be a large mass of floating pumice and ashes. The "Cutty's" apprentices were greatly intrigued by this phenomenon, and all swarmed over the rail with buckets to scoop up the novelty. Their idea of course was to add to their collection of sailor curios. They might have been less enthusiastic had they known how handy that pumice was going to come in for cleaning the "Cutty's" paintwork!

The ship's logs give incontestable proof of her superiority under equal conditions over most of her contemporaries. "Passed and signalled ship—," "Overhauled and passed full-rigged ship," "Passed barque—," are entries which occur with almost monotonous frequency. Devitt and Moore's fast clipper "Rodney" was one of the few which put up a good show against her. The two ships were in company once for some time, and so long as the wind was fresh the "Cutty" had the lead. When the breeze fell light the "Rodney" went to the front, and so it continued until the two ships parted company.

It is quite a common thing to hear an old sailor boast that some ship he has known could "sail rings round" her rivals. Generally it is no more than a



figure-of-speech, and the manoeuvre is as a matter of fact a very difficult one, since when a ship gets under the lee of another vessel the wind is very likely to go out of her sails if the two ships are at all close together.

But the "Cutty" did actually sail round other ships more than once, the last occasion being during her last voyage under the British flag, when she signalled the four-mast barque "California," belonging to the White Star Line of Liverpool. She passed her on one tack and the captain took a photograph of her; then, coming up under the "California's" stern, she passed her again on the other tack.

A rather amusing incident happened during one of the "Cutty's" outward passages to Sydney, when she overhauled a big four-masted barque under lower topsails and foresail, she herself at the time having everything set to main royal. She signalled the barque but received no reply. It was getting dusk, and the glass was falling rapidly; in fact, there were all the signs of a blow. But the sight of the "Cutty's" canvas was too much for the barque's captain, and he began to pile on sail for all he was worth. She had just set her main royal as dusk fell. Captain Woodget noted the ship's colour and rig in his log, with the comment that her captain evidently didn't want to be talked about.

American ships for some reason had rather a name at that time for failing to answer when signalled, but the big American sailing vessel "Shenandoah," reputed to be the fastest under the Stars and Stripes, signalled the "Cutty" when she passed her off the Horn, "What ship is that?"

Reports of unusual numbers of icebergs in the South Atlantic and about Cape Horn appeared in the logs

of most of the ships homeward bound from the Colonies in 1893, and the "Cutty Sark" was no exception to the rule.

She was somewhere about the sixtieth parallel, the weather thick and foggy, and the skipper was having some pea-soup in the cabin, when he heard the lookout-man sing out "Ice ahead." He deserted his soup and ran up on deck, and he never saw sailors move so quickly as those men did. There was a huge berg right ahead, and no sooner had she cleared that than another loomed out of the fog on the other bow.

No sooner had he gone below to his soup than the warning hail rang out once more, and there was not much chance of finishing it after that. The ship was among ice almost continuously for a week, during which time she sailed over eleven hundred miles. Sometimes there were between ninety and a hundred bergs in sight at once. By taking bearings Captain Woodget found one of the biggest to be nineteen and a half miles long, and he had already sailed eight and a half miles along the other side of it. Some of them were of great height, towering up two or three hundred feet above the water, and as the ship passed the proverbial "biscuit toss away" loud cracks and reports would be heard, like pistol-shots or the firing of artillery. It was an anxious time, for the weather was for the most part too thick to do more than "smell" the ice, and you cannot smell ice if it is to leeward.

One of the bergs sighted on this occasion was covered with what looked like lava or lumps of tallow, which rather bears out the theory that some great volcanic upheaval had loosened vast masses of the Antarctic glacier.

Old John Willis did not like his ships too fine aft. Being an old sailorman himself, he knew well enough

that a ship with a stern like a duck might go along very fast in light breezes or closehauled, but when running in heavy weather she would be so constantly pooped that she would very often be compelled to heave-to. Accordingly, he sent the plans of the "Cutty Sark" back more than once because he wanted her quarters filled in more.

Of course this extra weight aft cut both ways. It might not affect a ship's speed much when she loaded a light cargo like tea, but if she was at all deep in the water it was bound to do so; and Captain Woodget always thought he could have got another knot out of the ship if she had been a shade finer aft.

However, one cannot have it both ways, and it was probably the "Cutty's" rather full stern which saved her life when she encountered a tremendous sea while running down the easting in 1891.

This immense sea Captain Woodget considers may very well have been a tidal wave. The second mate and the carpenter were standing by the deckhouse for'ard, and looking up they saw a great tossing crest of foam towering up above the crossjack yard. The little ship tilted up and slid down the slope just like a toboggan on an ice-run. Then as she topped the ridge she hung suspended with her bow and stern almost out of the water. As she dropped the sea rose up on either side six or seven feet above her bulwarks, and then poured in amidships, flooding her decks and smashing in the cabin doors. The second mate and the carpenter had made a plunge and shut themselves in the deckhouse, and when they saw the green water through the ports poor Chips cried out, "Mein Gott, mein Gott, she is gone!"

But the ship rose to it gallantly, and, as her bow tilted up to climb the mountain of water, the water

poured along her decks and off over the poop, all but washing away the two men at the wheel.

The "Cutty" was by no means an "unlucky" ship. During her time in the Australian trade she lost only three men.

One of these was a first voyage apprentice, who was swept overboard from the lee braces as many a man has been before and since. The other two owed their death to a circumstance which may be expressed in five words—a baker at the wheel. The "Cutty" had shipped in Sydney a crew which contained a medley of occupations which reads like a quotation from the London Directory. There was a baker, a milkman, a soldier, a riveter, a stevedore—and the baker was at the wheel. It was fine, pleasant weather, and, the wind freshening a little, the outer jib was hauled down. Instead of coming back when the job was done, the two men who had gone out along the boom to make the jib fast stayed out there, as sailors often like to do, enjoying the beautiful picture a ship always presents when seen from that point of vantage. And just as it happened the baker let the ship fall away from the wind, and brought her suddenly up again. The "Cutty" put her boom under for the first time since her captain had known her, and the two men were washed off and drowned.

How she ever came to be sold to the Portuguese is something of a mystery. Captain Willis never sold a ship, unless it were for conversion into a hulk. "If she is not good enough to sail for me, she is not good enough for anyone else," he used to say. He sent his old ships to the breaker's yard, much as some people will not allow a favourite animal to pass into other hands, and it is a wonder that he did not leave some such instructions about his ships when he died,

especially so beloved a vessel as the "Cutty Sark."

It was not long after I saw her that she was bought by Captain Dowman, of Falmouth, who has since been having her restored to something resembling her original condition. Whether his ultimate intention is to utilize her as a sea-going training-ship or to keep her as a sort of show ship like the "Victory" I do not know. Probably she would last longer afloat than idling in harbour, so there may be still a chance that she will spread her white wings once again in sight of the stern old headlands which she has hailed so often, homeward bound with wool from the harbours of the Antipodes.

## CHAPTER VI

### WOOL

#### I. THE OLD "CITY OF AGRA"

**T**HE wooden ship was gone, or all but gone. The brief era of the composite ship was all but gone likewise. But the development of the sailing ship was yet to reach perhaps its highest pitch before the inevitable decline.

No ships have ever been built which have been at once more swift, more seaworthy, and more staunch than the beautiful wool clippers whose masts and long spars made forests of the harbours of the Antipodes; whose shapely hulls and carven figureheads were the last gleam of romance in the steam-invaded docks of London and of Liverpool. The great American and Canadian built clippers of the 'fifties and 'sixties were wonders of speed, driven by the most daring and reckless shipmasters the world had ever seen. But their day was a short one. Their soft-wood hulls, straining by merciless driving in the seas of the high south latitudes, sodden with water, were soon past their best, and those which were not ultimately destroyed by fire dragged out their days as timber carriers in the North Atlantic or in the odoriferous guano trade.

The China clippers were built to last. But, alas! with the passing of the particular trade for which they were designed their sphere of usefulness ended. Ships were growing gradually larger, and those whose carrying



capacity had been sacrificed to obtain the maximum of speed, as in the case of these yacht-like little vessels, had perforce to drop out of the race for cargoes. The "Cutty Sark" was one of the latest and largest of the China tea fleet—indeed, she was only in the tea trade for a few voyages. And what a midget she looked in the Surrey Docks beside an ugly steam tramp and one of the steel barques built in the 'eighties which were there at the same time!

The steamship had driven off the seas the Western Ocean packets with their hard-case skippers, their driving mates, their turbulent but intrepid crews. The Suez Canal had killed the China tea clipper. The Blackwaller, trim and spruce, with her traditions that went back to John Company, had given place to the steamers of the P. & O. and Orient Lines. But the stately iron clippers which were being built on the Clyde and Wear, the Tyne and Mersey, by such builders as Steele, Hall, Duthie and Hood of Aberdeen, Connell, Russell, and Barclay Curle of Glasgow, Potter of Liverpool, and Pile of Sunderland, were worthy successors to the vanished pride of sail. The day of Thames-side as a cradle of ships was done, with the passing of oak and teak and elm, and the coming of steel and iron as the raw material of the shipbuilder.

No ships, perhaps, have been more durable than these old iron clippers. The "Cutty Sark" stands almost alone as representing the age of oak and teak, and she is a composite, like the old "Lothair," one of the very last of the tea clippers, which—built in 1870 at Walker's well-known yard on Thames-side—was still afloat up to a very few years ago under the Chilean flag, and for all I know may be so still. It is many, many years since the last Blackwaller spread her wings for the Port of Dead Man's Bay.

But there are still quite a number of old iron ships (older than the "Cutty Sark" by several years) plodding the seas around in all sorts of alien bondage, neglected, undermanned, unkept, stinted of paint and tar and seizing. I saw one such not long ago—the old "Daphne"—in the Surrey Docks discharging a cargo of firewood from the Baltic. She was a ship with a very pretty figure-head—a girl with a Grecian fillet—and a quantity of handsome carving in the Victorian style about the saloon and the state-room doors. I do not know what sort of a history she had—probably not a particularly distinguished one, for I never met anyone who had even heard of her. She was built in 1869—the same year as the "Cutty"—and by all appearance she had plenty of honest service left in her yet.

Then there was the old "Montrosa," built in 1863. She was no flyer; indeed, I believe her history is a remarkable record of abnormally long passages, which may not, for all that, have been due entirely to the little ship's bad sailing qualities. She may well have been just an unlucky ship—pursued by casualties, by calms, by contrary winds—and perhaps not blessed in her captains. She came from Barclay Curle's yard, and Barclay Curle seldom turned out a bad sailer. And her little figure-head had somehow a wistful look, as if the years had not dealt too kindly with it. . . . But for all her sixty years of service she, too, seemed to have little amiss with her, beyond such externals as a reasonable outlay upon the usual requisites of a ship's toilet would very soon put to rights.

And that amazing old "Antiope," she who left the stocks at Glasgow in 1866—what an odyssey has been hers of wars and wrecks, of disasters and escapes! And like enough, if it had not been for the shipping

slump which followed the war boom, she might have been sailing the seas still !

I do not know if the old Australian-owned "Ivanhoe" is still going. She was in 1913, I know, for I saw her at Victoria in that year. No doubt many who knew Sydney in the old days remember her. I do not know much of her history, but it would surely be worth the telling. Was she, I wonder, the ship which made a phenomenally long passage to Frisco, and arrived there disabled, almost a wreck, without assistance ?

The old "Hesperus" is yet another ship with an interesting and romantic career. The outbreak of war found her in the Baltic, where she was serving as a training ship under the name of "Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna," but by some means she got out of the hands of the Bolsheviks and bobbed up again under the British flag as the "Silvana." Not long ago she suffered the rather unusual indignity of being "taken for debt," owing to some neglect to pay harbour dues in a foreign—I think a South American—port.

What is the real reason for the durability of these iron ships as compared with the later steel vessels ? I believe the technical explanation is that the plates of an iron ship merely become encrusted on the outside, instead of flaking off both inside and out like steel plates. Steel plates in course of time become through this flaking off so thin and rotten that a touch will rip them open ; whereas the iron alters very little in thickness with the passage of time.

Old Captain John Willis, the owner of "Cutty Sark" and of such well-known iron ships as the "Dharwar" and the tea clippers "Blackadder" and "Hallowe'en," would seldom or never have his ships chipped. Once when dining with the captain of the

wool clipper "Gladstone," his host had a discussion with Captain John on the subject, suggesting that, if the rust were left on, it would continue to eat into the iron underneath.

"Let it eat away!" said Captain Willis; "the ships will last my time!"

. . . . .

One of the very first of the iron wool clippers was that fine old ship the "City of Agra," of 1,074 tons, so well known in Melbourne for many years. She was built in 1860 by Pile of Sunderland, from whose yard came also such famous ships as the frigate-built Blackwallers "Roxburgh Castle," "Windsor Castle" (a very fast little ship), "Newcastle," "Malabar," and "Lord Warden," and the iron wool ships "Sam Mendel" and "Rodney."

The "City of Agra's" original owner was Mr. John Coupland, of Liverpool, but in 1878 she was sold, together with her sister ship, "Sam Mendel," to Mr. T. Blyth of Melbourne, after which date she had Melbourne on her stern as her port of registry. She was commanded for many years by Captain Young, who, after a long and interesting career afloat, is still in harness in connexion with the Board of Trade scheme for training boys for the Merchant Service; so that her history is very complete from the time of Captain Young's joining her as mate in 1869.

She was at that time commanded by a Captain Ellwood, a man well on in years, who had left the sea some years before, and—like a good many other old sailormen—had not been much of a success in business, and so had returned to his old ship.

She sailed for Shanghai on July 7th. She had

previously been thoroughly overhauled and refitted. Her yards had been nearly all renewed, and her Cunningham's patent topsails had been replaced by double topsail yards. Probably very few people nowadays have had a personal acquaintance with the various patent devices which were adopted to facilitate the handling of the old single topsails which prevailed up to the 'sixties, of which Howe's and Cunningham's were the best known.

The "City" had a beautiful black cat on board, but when pursuing a bird one day it fell overboard and was drowned. The credulous might almost be pardoned for seeing some connexion between this sad occurrence and the many troubles which befell the ship during the voyage.

She was eighty days to Anjer, and, says Captain Young, "I can remember the feeling of strangeness in the new kind of navigation in the China Seas and Straits of Sunda." The "City" was twice aground in the Banka Straits, and the struggle to gain nothing through the Palawan Pass was at times very disheartening. Night after night the ship had to come down from "all sail" to lower topsails twice in a watch.

After about thirty days of wearisome beating against the north-east monsoon, the north end of Luzon was passed, and two days later at midday the ship entered the Bashee Channel. The Bashee Islands lie between the islands of Formosa and Luzon, and form the line of demarcation between the Pacific Ocean and the China Sea.

Before sunset there was a strong gale blowing from the north-east, and the glass was falling rapidly. Two courses were open, either to run back into the China Sea, where, however, it would be impossible to show canvas to it and steer through the Channel, or to keep



all possible sail on the ship and get her clear of the unpleasant proximity of the many islands and rocks of the Bashee group.

By two in the morning all the sails had blown out of the bolt-ropes, and the dawn disclosed a prospect far from cheering. About eight o'clock a big sea came aboard, smashing up all the bulwark-rail fore and aft, wrecking all the boats, and stoving in the fore deck-house. A little later another tremendous sea smashed in the front of the poop, and tore the spare spar from its lashings on the lee side of the deck. Half a dozen men went down into the whirling maelstrom in the main-deck and succeeded in securing the spar, but it was impossible to make more than a temporary job of it. The crew were all lashed on the poop, and biscuits, tinned meat, and small tots of brandy served out every four hours. A voluntary lookout was stationed in the mizzen-top to look out for the Bashee reefs.

The ship lay helplessly wallowing in the trough of the sea, with a rag of canvas spread in her mizen rigging to try to keep her head to wind. Darkness brought no abatement of the raging wind and sea, and the crew spent a miserable night, conscious that the ship was being steadily driven nearer and nearer to the Bashee Rocks. All the time men were working at the smashed-in front of the poop improvising temporary protection against the seas which threatened to destroy all the provisions stored there.

The second day dawned dark and wild. It was impossible to hear a man speak, for the noise of the wind was like the ceaseless roar of artillery. The seas striking the ship in continual succession made a clean breach all over her. The galley-fire had been out for thirty-six hours, and the four-hourly ration of biscuits,



meat, and brandy served through the saloon skylight by the steward was all the food the men had had. By this time nearly every one was feeling very down-hearted. Between nine and ten that morning the wind seemed to become more furious than ever, and the sea, says Captain Young, "seemed to me the very greatest and grandest sight I had ever looked at." He refers to the mathematical regularity in the long valley of water between each towering comber and the milk-white driven spume raising quite a dense mist as the curlers came shrieking and thundering along in their next frantic disastrous attempt to batter us to pieces."

And before their onslaughts the gallant little "City" lay helpless, yet still unshattered; her bulwarks swept away, deckhouse, poop, and forecastle stove, not a vestige of a boat left. She had been lying over with a list of about twenty degrees to starboard for the last eighteen hours, so that the whole of the deck on the lee side was under water and every part of the hatches. Luckily, however, the hatches had been caulked and fastened down with ropes in readiness for the typhoon season, and it only remained to hope that they would hold good. The greatest trial of all, however, was the haunting dread of the Bashee rocks and reefs somewhere out in that seething turmoil to lee. A typhoon is bad enough when there is plenty of sea-room, but where the seaman's greatest dread, a lee shore, is added to its perils, his plight is an evil one indeed. Whenever it cleared a little every eye was turned at once to leeward to see if the rocks were in sight.

"It must have been about eleven o'clock that forenoon," says Captain Young, "when without any warning at all, and just as if the last of the blasts had come out of a gun, it suddenly became dead calm. At the

same time the air became full of flies, butterflies, little birds and bigger ones, along with some tens of thousands of strange winged insects. Everything which came in the course of the storm had been blown or drawn into the centre of it, and it was the storm's eye or centre which was now passing over the ship."

This terrific and awe-inspiring calm lasted about eighteen minutes—the more so because of the feeling of suspense and expectation which accompanied it. Then the storm burst forth again as suddenly as it had ceased, and if possible with even greater violence. Now, however, instead of blowing from the north-east it came from the north-west.

The wind striking the ship from this new direction brought her head up towards the wind, and the seas, still racing furiously from the north-west, now assaulted her on the bow. For fully half an hour after the wind shifted the seas were fighting the wind as it blew from the new quarter. The wind would tear away the whole top of the wave and whirl it skyward in clouds of fine spray ; but still the seas came plunging on to break over the poor little ship. About half an hour of the conflict reduced the seas to a state of spindrift, and before the sea had time to rise from the north-west the lee side of the foresail was loosed and foretopmast staysail set, together with the storm fore and main staysails, which had not blown away. In a few minutes she paid off to eastward, and at the same time the haze cleared to the west and south, and revealed the Bashee Islands not far away.

All hands at once started bending sail, and by four o'clock she was staggering to the north-east under courses, upper and lower topsails and storm staysails.

The peril was over. The carpenter reported that no water had got into the ship and the cargo proved to

be quite undamaged. But the damage to the ship cost over £6,000 to repair, and she had to go down to Farnham's Yard to refit.

Shanghai in those days was a very conservative place in many ways, with a system of carrying goods older than the days of Confucius, and in some less harmless fashions as well. At that time they would not allow a telegraph wire to be laid in China, and when a submarine cable was brought up from Hong-Kong and fixed to the lightship at Woo-sung the Chinese cut it. And in one of the public squares there was to be seen a large iron cage in which was sometimes imprisoned a wretched criminal slowly dying of starvation (or a person accused of a crime, for according to Chinese judicial methods the two things are very much the same). From Shanghai the ship went on to Hong-Kong, and while there another typhoon passed over, without however doing much harm other than causing great alarm among the thousands of sampan dwellers in the harbour. Thousands of families live in these boats, which range from twelve to sixteen feet in length, and the children's principal garment is a contrivance very similar to the familiar "water wings"—a couple of inflated bladders fastened on to the shoulders, and connected by a strong belt of leather, calico, or string, which can easily be caught by a boathook if the youngster happens to fall into the water.

The "City" then went over to Manila to load sugar, hemp, and shells for New York. In those days, of course, Manila was still under Spanish rule, and the characteristic "mañana" spirit prevailed everywhere. Laws and officials there were in plenty, but a judicious application of palm-oil in the right quarter generally sufficed to make the foreigner exempt from vexatious

restrictions upon his liberty. Among the cargo taken on board at Manila were some hundreds of cases of mother-of-pearl shell. Manila is a great place for shells, and among the varieties which may be bought there are some of the most beautiful in the world.

The ship made an excellent passage down the China Sea, having the benefit of the north-east monsoon all the way, and thus reaching Anjer in ten days. But in the Java Sea the troubles of the voyage recommenced. A squall caught the vessel just as she was going about, which carried away the bobstay and sprung the bowsprit. The damage was repaired for the time being by means of a big purchase of five-inch bolt-rope which was set up from the foremast head to a chain lashing round the bow under the figure-head. This contrivance served its purpose admirably through some heavy weather in the Indian Ocean.

More bad weather on the South African coast resulted in damage to the head stays, which necessitated a call of two days at Cape Town for repairs, before proceeding to New York. Next came a trouble of a different kind. An epidemic of fish poisoning broke out among the crew. Nearly every man in the forecastle suffered, and in severe cases the faces of the victims were swollen and distorted. Liberal doses of salts and castor oil, the shipmaster's rough-and-ready but effective stand-by in such emergencies, soon brought about a general recovery.

By this time the ship had accumulated a tremendous amount of shells and barnacles, which were partially cleaned off so as to increase her speed from seven and a half to eight and a half or nine knots. The device employed was simplicity itself, but it worked well, and it had the additional advantage that it could be used either in light or strong breezes.

A small chain, thrummed with coir yarn, was passed under the bow of the ship from rail to rail. The chain was then drawn tightly round the ship, with a bridle leading to the capstan forward and another aft, and by means of these the chain was dragged to and fro along the barnacle-encrusted hull, making a thick wake of loosened marine growths.

After discharging her Manila cargo in New York the "City" sailed for St. John, New Brunswick, in ballast for a cargo of deals. St. John at that time was a very quiet, old-fashioned place, with the "duck-board" side-walks which are to be seen to-day in most new western towns.

It was then—in 1870—still a very busy place for shipbuilding, and soft-wood ships were being turned out there in large numbers. These ships were mostly intended for the lumber trade, and only carried a seven years' class for dry or perishable cargoes, as against ten or twelve (fourteen if built under cover) in the case of English hard-wood ships. The "City of Agra" was still looked on as something of a novelty, and several of the leading shipbuilders in the place came down to inspect her and see how an iron vessel was made.

It was late in October when the "City" crossed the Atlantic on the last lap of her long and chequered voyage, and once more she was to come in for her full share of bad weather, the ship being for twenty-four hours half-over on her beam ends.

She left Liverpool again on Christmas Eve, bound this time for Melbourne with fifty steerage and twelve saloon passengers, in the teeth of a north-westerly gale. The start was unpropitious, for she had some of her steerage ports smashed in by the seas, so that she had to put in to Holyhead to repair the damage.



However, this proved to be the only untoward happening of the passage. The bad luck seemed to have worn itself out. An easterly gale took her clear out of the Channel, she crossed the Equator on the twenty-second day out, and the meridian of the Cape on the forty-fourth, anchoring in Hobson's Bay on the sixty-fifth day out from Holyhead.

In three weeks she went on to Newcastle, N.S.W., making the passage from Sandridge Pier in four days, and a little over a week later she sailed with a cargo of coal for Hong-Kong. She made Hong-Kong in thirty days, passing by Norfolk Island, of so many evil and tragic associations, coasting the no less sinister shores of New Caledonia, and entering the China Seas by way of the Bashee Channel, where she had so nearly ended her career in the typhoon of the previous voyage. From Hong-Kong she went on once again to Manila to load sugar and hemp for New York.

Old Captain Ellwood had been getting steadily worse in health all this time, and at Anjer he was put ashore while a doctor was obtained. On the day Cape Agulhas was passed, however, he came on deck to the general surprise of all on board, with the signal book in his hand, and ordered the signal to be hoisted, "Captain is quite well." But it was only a flicker from a dying fire. A few days later the old man began to wander in his mind, and the mate took it upon himself to disregard his orders to pass two hundred miles west of St. Helena, and steered direct for that island. There Captain Ellwood was put ashore, and not long afterwards he died.

The new captain's reign opened with a rather narrow escape from collision with a couple of gunboats on the harbour. The morning was very calm, and the ship



was anchored in thirty fathoms of water, among a crowd of other vessels, including the gunboats and a number of sailing craft. The anchor was hove short and all sail above the courses set, when one of the sudden squalls so frequently encountered off the island came down the gullies from the south-west. The ship rapidly gathered stern-way and made straight for the waist of the nearest gunboat as if to cut it in two; and although no time was lost in bracing up the foreyard and the main and mizen to starboard, she was within twenty feet of the gunboat before she began to lose sternway. Then, coming round, she passed right between the gunboats, whose crews paid her the compliment of a hearty round of cheering. Ten minutes later she was off and away with stunsails spread.

It was something in the nature of a coincidence that only the previous evening one of the naval officers, when visiting the ship, had chanced to remark :

" You know, we always admire the way you merchant chaps get your ships into and out of these ports. We never have the opportunity of trying to do it ourselves, but we should probably make a hash of it if we attempted to handle our ships under sail without the help of the auxiliary screw ! "

New York Harbour was full of ice when the " City of Agra " arrived, and a tug came pushing her way through it and offered to tow her up to her berth for fifteen hundred dollars. The captain hesitated, and as it happened it was a good thing he did, for a thaw the following night brought the tug's price down to a hundred and thirty-five dollars.

Bargaining with tugboat skippers was one of the multifarious duties which fell to the lot of the oldtime skipper in sail, and an astute haggler who could bluff

well was worth on occasion many a good pound to his owners. The tug in those days played a much more important part than it does nowadays, and on more than one occasion a racing clipper has been beaten on the post through the runner-up securing a more powerful towboat, or even snatching her own from under her nose !

Captain Young had rather an unusual experience in New York, for he was very near being arrested for the offence of detaining against his will a citizen of the United States.

It came about in this way. A Greek sailor had been signed on in Manila to replace a man who had run the ship at Hong-Kong, receiving a month's advance on joining and some tobacco from the ship's stores, leaving about ten pounds due to him. In New York he got into the hands of the crimps and promptly vanished ; and a "shyster" lawyer attempted a thinly concealed form of blackmail by demanding from the captain double the amount due to the sailor in return for a formal release from the ship signed by him. The sailor, be it said, had since landing become an American citizen.

The captain declined, and the lawyer's demand came down by five dollars at a time until it reached ten. And, the captain still refusing to close, he even sent his clerk running after him with a further reduction to five dollars !

Second thoughts, however, are sometimes best, and on the advice of his agent the captain finally closed with the offer and handed over the five dollars ; for as the agent pointed out, the man was undoubtedly in the hands of the crimps, and the authorities could make it very awkward for him in view of the man's adoption of American nationality.

Accordingly, when he next went ashore he met the lawyer, who hailed him at once.

"Waal, Cap., have you thought better of it?"

"Have you the paper on you that you spoke of?" inquired the captain.

"Why, sure."

The five dollars and the paper changed hands; and sure enough on returning to the ship the captain found a marshal and two constables waiting for him.

"Are you Captain Young?" demanded the marshal.

"I am."

"Then in the name of the Republic of the United States I arrest you!"

"And why?"

"For your refusal to accede to the request of one —, a citizen of the United States, who desired to leave your ship."

Out came the release signed by the sailor, and the marshal, looking and no doubt feeling rather foolish, faded from the scene.

No doubt the person who came out worst in this transaction was the unfortunate Greek-American, who would in due course find himself shipped in an outward bounder with his advance note in the possession of his friends the crimps.

The "City of Agra" was chartered for her next voyage—for Melbourne with cargo and passengers—by the White Star Line, just then starting in the North Atlantic trade and elsewhere, the old name and house-flag of Messrs. Pilkington & Wilson having been recently acquired by Messrs Ismay, Imrie & Co. The only notable incident of the passage out was when she was a week past the meridian of the Cape; the glass fell to 28.50, heralding a big blow which did a good deal of minor damage to the ship.

She sailed for home about two months later, on October 6th, with wool, taking the route west of Tasmania instead of that by Bass Straits. She was only two days out from Melbourne, and off the south-westerly point of Tasmania, when a strong gale accompanied by squalls of rain began to blow from the south-east.

By night topgallant sails, mainsail, and crojick had come in. Later in the evening the foretopmast staysail sheet washed off the bitts, and the captain and mate went for'ard to attend to it. Assisted by the lookout-man for'ard they took in the slack of the weather sheet and were hauling the sheet aft, when the ship plunged her bows deep into a tremendous sea.

The captain was washed clean over the rail, where he hung for a time head down, but luckily he had retained his grip of the sheet, and was able to get hold of the rail and regain the deck. His companions had fared less well. The lookout-man lay groaning, pinned to the deck beneath the lee anchor, which had been lifted by the sea. But of Mr. Wright, the mate, and a relative and lifelong friend of the captain, there was no sign.

All hands were turned out, and an attempt made to lower a boat, which was however instantly smashed to matchwood against the side of the ship. Nothing was to be done. It was yet one more example of perhaps the bitterest moment that can come within a seaman's experience—when he knows that his shipmate is fighting a desperate and hopeless fight out there in the seas, and he cannot stretch out a hand to save him.

The homeward passage was well under ninety days. Off the Lizard the "City of Agra" ran into wet, thick, dirty weather, and for a little while she was in

company with the wool clipper "Yatala," bound from Adelaide. The "Yatala" was a London built composite ship belonging to the Orient Line, with several very fast passages to her credit.

The weather continued very thick right up the Channel, and on arrival Captain Young learned that the "Yatala" had become a total wreck on the French coast near Cape Gris-nez, fortunately, however, without loss of life.

On her next voyage the ship was intended to go on to Frisco from Australia to load grain, phenomenally high rates having been paid out of that port the previous season. But owing to rumours of a crop failure in the West the "City of Agra" loaded three hundred horses for Calcutta instead—luckily for her, as it happened, since the failure of the crop resulted in an ignominious scramble for nitrate and lumber cargoes amongst the big fleet of windjammers which had gathered in Frisco Harbour.

A good many of the horses died at the commencement of the voyage, which started with a south-westerly gale blowing, but after clearing the Australian coast there were no more casualties, and the remainder were landed at Madras and Calcutta in good condition.

At Madras the ship lay about a mile from the shore, and the landing was carried out by means of Massoulah boats, manned by twelve coolies. If a horse kicked out as it was being lowered into the boat, over the whole dozen would jump into the water; however, a sailor was put in charge of each boat, so that performance soon stopped. There was at that time no wharf of any kind, and when the boat got into about four feet of water the horse was simply tipped out and made to swim for it. People were also landed in



these boats, but in their case the treatment was less unceremonious. They were carried through the shallows seated in arm-chairs hoisted on long bamboos.

Captain Young saw at Madras the last relics of his old ship "Ardbeg," one of several victims of a disastrous hurricane which had swept Madras Roads some years before.

From Madras the ship went on to Calcutta, and there landed the rest of her horses; then home, to load this time for Lyttelton, New Zealand, under charter to Shaw, Savill & Co.

The ship was full up with passengers this trip, and rather an amusing incident happened. A ship called the "Buckinghamshire" (one of Marshall's all-but-forgotten fleet, mostly named after English counties) had sailed a couple of days before, and on the morning of the "City's" sailing day a woman came on board.

"Is this ship going to Lyttelton?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Is she a fast ship?"

"Well, yes, I should say so."

"And do you think she will get there before the 'Buckinghamshire'?"

Of course any captain would have answered in the affirmative; and the inquiring lady took a steerage passage in the "City of Agra," all the cabin and second class berths being taken.

It turned out that her husband had deserted her, and sailed in the "Buckinghamshire." As it happened, the "City of Agra" lived up to the assurances which had been made on her behalf, and the runaway husband had the surprise of his life when he landed at Lyttelton and found his injured wife waiting for him on the landing-stage.



He must have had either unusual effrontery or abnormal presence of mind, for he retained his self-possession sufficiently to thank the captain warmly for bringing his wife out so promptly.

The passage was a fast one—seventy-six days—and the ship met with some severe weather running the easting down. There were quite a number of well-known ships in Lyttelton—"Golden Empire," "Northampton," and "Dunedin" among others—and plenty of gay doings were afoot aboard one or another of them.

The ship went on to Newcastle from Lyttelton by the southerly route to load coal, and made the second best passage from Lyttelton, arriving at Newcastle twenty days out, after terrible weather. Several of the ships which took the northerly route were forty days on passage, and others which went by Cook's Straits were anchored there for a number of days.

She loaded coal at Newcastle for Melbourne, where she took on board her wool at Sandridge Pier, sailing for London in December. One of the saloon passengers this voyage employed his leisure in very profitable fashion, catching and preserving albatrosses, and so successful was he that he sold them for forty pounds when he arrived in London. It was perhaps lucky for him that the passage was marked by no untoward incident, otherwise the crew might have insisted upon the collection—if not the collector—being committed to the waves.

I do not know either the origin or the age of the legend regarding the albatross immortalized by Coleridge in "The Ancient Mariner." The occurrence upon which the poem is based came, of course, from a passage in (I think) Dampier's "Voyages"; but the idea certainly seems to have been exploded in the

days of the nineteenth century shellback, perhaps as superstitious a being as ever lived in some respects, for it was quite usual among windjammer crews in the 'eighties and 'nineties to catch these noble birds with a baited hook, and make their feet into tobacco pouches, the latter being one of the most popular of sailors' "curios." And that at a time when the belief (alluded to by Charles Kingsley in "The Water Babies," by Mr. John Masefield in his poems, and others) was still quite generally held at sea that albatrosses and other deep-sea birds are inhabited by the souls of dead-and-gone seamen.

Wages out of London at that time were not more than three pounds a month, and out of Melbourne they were never less than five pounds, consequently many ships had a good deal of trouble owing to the blandishments of the Melbourne crimps. It was customary on board the "City of Agra" to give the men the option of taking their discharge and a week's board or staying by the ship. Most men took the chance of the discharge, but on one occasion the captain was rather badly let down, as four of the crew and the cook, who had elected to stay on, found the attractions of Melbourne Cup day too much for them, and deserted the day before the ship sailed. However, the captain got even with them, for he discovered the names of the ships in which they had sailed, and on their arrival in London claimed the deserters' wages. The culprits received a pound apiece by way of consolation, and there were no more sailing day desertions from the "City of Agra."

In London the carpenters took possession of the ship and fitted her up for the Queensland emigrant trade. The only cargo she carried was enough to steady her a little, and in addition she took out three

locomotives of twenty-five tons each and some ten-ton boilers.<sup>1</sup>

There were about three hundred emigrants on board, married couples, single men and girls, and children. As usual in emigrant ships, the single men were berthed for'ard, the girls aft, and the married couples amidships. The passage was not without its humorous incidents, as well as one episode which might have ended very seriously for all concerned.

It was shortly after the wreck of the "Schiller" on the Scilly Islands with terrible loss of life, and amongst those saved were a number of Fenians, who afterwards took passage to Australia in the "City of Agra."

Now, there were among the married women on board several who were expecting to become mothers—there were generally one or two births on board an emigrant ship at that time—and to these were of course served out special medical comforts such as stout, brandy, and eggs.

Here was another injustice to old Ireland! The doctor and the mate reported a good deal of covert insolence on the part of the Fenians when they were making their usual evening round of the emigrants' quarters. This went on until one evening the malcontents gathered together at one side of the deck and began to give open expression to their intention of breaking open the stores and helping themselves.

The next morning the second officer came aft in a state of considerable alarm to tell the captain that the whole gang—fifty in number—had assembled outside the store-room and had every appearance of meaning mischief.

<sup>1</sup> See NOTE on p. 146.

The captain hastily slipped on a dressing-gown and, hastening to the spot, asked what was the meaning of this early morning assembly.

"Our tickets are the same as every one else's," explained the leader; "those women have paid no more than we have, and why should one have stout and brandy served out more than another? We have asked the storekeeper for our ration of stout and brandy, and he won't give it to us, so now we are going to get our rights, if we have to take them!"

"Do you know why these women have the extra stores served out to them?" enquired the captain.

"Sure an' we do! But that's all an excuse! What one has another should have, and we mean to have the same as they do, or there'll be trouble."

The captain then asked if they realized that their talk amounted to open mutiny. He was met by the assertion that "passengers can't mutiny."

The moment was evidently one for decided action. Singling out the four men who had done most of the talking, Captain Young told them to go aft on to the poop, and then, calling the boatswain, ordered all hands on deck. A small spar was placed across the poop, and the four ringleaders, together with eight of the ugliest-looking among their followers, were ironed to the spar with the eight pairs of handcuffs which formed the "City of Agra's" complete outfit in that line. The chart was then placed ostentatiously on the skylight, and a course set for Pernambuco, in the direction of which port the ship at that time chanced in fact to be heading.

Next, the Fenians' chests were all brought up on to the poop, and, their owners having sullenly refused to open them, the carpenter was called on to do so.

Every chest proved to contain a revolver and a supply of ammunition, which were promptly thrown overboard before their owners' eyes.

The passengers were then mustered and the situation explained to them in the hearing of the prisoners, the statement concluding with a reminder that many of them had wives and daughters on board, and that if law and order were set at naught it would be a sorry day for them.

"We are now," added the captain, "heading for the nearest Brazilian port ; but it is quite likely that the authorities will not allow these men to be landed there, in which case we shall be compelled to carry them on to Australia. And it will then be the duty of every man on board to take his share in keeping these Fenians in subjection."

The prisoners very soon began to quarrel among themselves, and to blame one another for the plight they were in ; and before long they appealed to the doctor to put in a word on their behalf.

The captain, however, judged that they were not sufficiently tamed, so they had to spend a very uncomfortable night in irons, and in the morning a hand was sent aloft to keep a lookout for land. As a matter of fact, the captain gave the order with his tongue in his cheek for the prisoners' special benefit, the land being really rather more than three hundred miles away.

By this time the mutineers were thoroughly chastened, and after breakfast they were set at liberty. During the rest of the voyage they were "as good as a second crew," nor did the captain ever hear that they turned out other than law-abiding citizens of the country of their adoption.

Not all the incidents of the voyage were of such a



serious complexion. Coming on deck to shoot the sun one noon the captain saw rather a brutal bout of fisticuffs in progress by the main hatch—"married versus single"—the women standing round and cheering on the combatants, although blood was flying freely.

The order was given to port the helm a couple of points, bringing the wind and sea more on the beam, and a big dollop of water flopped aboard, which tumbled the combatants and most of the women into the scuppers and brought the fight to an abrupt end.

In sailing passenger ships it always used to be the custom to put a bag for letters outside the cabin door a few weeks after leaving port, in case an opportunity should offer of getting a homeward-bounder to take them on board. The opportunity did not invariably occur, and then the letters were sorted out and returned to their writers.

This happened once in the "City of Agra," greatly to the perplexity of one disappointed damsel, who was heard to exclaim:—

"Och, Captain, here's me own lettther come back to me!"

Nearly all these girls going out to Queensland were Irish, and very decent, well-behaved lasses they were all round. There was among them, as it happened, one solitary Welsh girl, and, unluckily for her, she had taken the opportunity in her undelivered letter of giving a more entertaining than complimentary account for the edification of her people at home of the ways of her Irish fellow-passengers.

Her unlucky composition somehow fell into the hands of her fellow-emigrants, and, since you cannot anger an Irishman or an Irishwoman more than by



making game of him or her, great was the indignation amongst the girls against the deceiver who had thus been ridiculing them. Indeed, feeling ran so high that the daughter of Wales was threatened with bodily violence, and she had to be hidden away in the maternity hospital under lock and key lest she should be torn to pieces.

About a fortnight later (the Welsh girl being still in solitary confinement) there was a heavy storm and a high sea from the west-south-west; and the captain, who was losing patience with the Irish brigade for keeping up the feud so long, told the matron in the hearing of some of the girls that it looked very much as if the wrath of Heaven were going to fall upon these arrogant and unforgiving girls.

About midnight a tremendous sea came on board which tore to rags a storm lower topsail and broke in two a stunsail boom upon which it had been rigged so as to afford extra protection to the main-hatch, the latter having, of course, to be kept open to allow some ventilation between decks. Several tons of water poured into the hatch, and the occupants of the lower berths were washed out of their beds, while the decks were two or three feet deep in water.

The poor girls were nearly terrified out of their wits, thinking that the captain's prophecy was sure enough going to come true. The Welsh girl was reinstated among her companions the next morning; but not before she had pulled up her skirts and gone down on her bare knees to ask pardon!

The Maryborough passengers were taken off by tender, and while the steamer was alongside some of the sailors got on board and obtained drinks at the bar, after which they began to make free with the girls in the third class. The mate at once drew his

revolver on them, and, leaving off molesting the girls, they took possession of one of the boats and pulled off to Great Sandy Island, a mile from which the ship was moored.

The third mate and a couple of apprentices who had gone with the boat landed the roysterers on the island and returned to the ship.

Presently they got tired of their picnic and wanted to get back ; but as they had no boat they had perforce to stop where they were all night. In the morning the captain rowed over to the island to talk to them, and was greeted with a volley of bad language.

" Well," said he, " I was in hopes that after your night on the beach you would have been sobered enough to come on board again. When you are prepared to apologize properly and civilly I'll take you back. But in the meantime it's plain that another night on the beach will do you good."

And with this he departed, turning a deaf ear to their loud protestations that they were dying of hunger and thirst.

The next day they came on board in decidedly chastened mood, and there was no further trouble.

Returning one evening to the ship after an evening with some hospitable Australians, the captain was astonished to find three of his apprentices afloat each inside a four-hundred-gallon tank !

These tanks, which had formed a part of the " City of Agra's " cargo, had been put on board the little steam lighter which had unloaded her, and the lighter-man had asked for the three boys to accompany him, in case he should require a helping hand with the tanks.

Off they went accordingly ; and as it happened the

lighter sank in six feet of water, the tanks floating off with a boy in each.

The old "City" had one of the narrow escapes of her career when on the way to Portland from Melbourne for a wool cargo in 1878.

Off Port Phillip Heads it was blowing a south-easterly gale, and twelve hours after the pilot had been landed the lights were sighted in Portland Bay. The sea and wind were setting right into the Bay, and the ship was hove-to on the port tack with her head to westward until the gale moderated. Otherwise she would probably have shared the fate of practically all the shipping in the bay, which (so it was learned on entering the harbour in the afternoon) had been driven ashore during the storm. Portland Bay is an excellent and safe anchorage during any weather but a south-easterly gale; but in future, when loading at Portland, the ship was always kept ready to run for the open sea should south-easterly weather threaten.

When she arrived in Portland the sergeant of police very soon came on board, and asked rather anxiously if the intention was to allow the crew ashore during the ship's stay.

"Possibly," said the captain. "Why do you ask?"

"Well, sir," said the sergeant, who seemed mightily worried, "sailors have a way of giving a good deal of trouble when they come ashore, and there's only meself and the two constables; so if they are coming ashore I'll have to get some more men down to help us."

By some means this got round among the crew, so that it is hardly surprising that they laid themselves out to make things lively for the sergeant as soon as the opportunity offered. This came when the ship

was about half or three parts loaded, and operations had to be suspended until more wool came down, half of the crew at a time being given shore leave.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning when a party went ashore, and as soon as they got off the wharf they spied a girl wheeling a baby on a perambulator. They took possession of the baby and put the girl in the pram in its place ; then wheeled her off up the street at a tremendous pace, accompanied by an interested crowd.

Next they met the police sergeant, removed his hat and put it on the head of the girl in the pram, and continued their triumphal progress, the crowd having now become quite large.

When they had let off their superfluous spirits they presented their involuntary passenger with a box of chocolates, replaced the baby, returned the sergeant's hat, and spent the rest of their time ashore in a highly decorous fashion.

The only harm that was done was that to the sergeant's dignity. He—poor man !—was sadly ruffled and complained that no warning had been given of their landing ; for “ Sure,” he said, “ they're the awfulest divils that ever came out of a ship ! ”

In May, 1880, the “ City of Agra ” varied her usual programme of loading in London for the outward passage by going over to Christiania to take in lumber for Australia. Off the Nore she met a strong gale of wind from the north-east, and was compelled to anchor. The wind stuck in the same quarter for several days, about a hundred sail being wind-bound at the same time ; whenever the weather showed any sign of moderating some of them would up anchor and away, only to be driven back again in a few hours with bulwarks smashed in and sails blown to rags.

On the outward passage, when in 40 south latitude, and off the island of Madagascar, the ship encountered a violent south-westerly gale. She had been carrying a heavy press of sail so long as the wind, although fresh, remained in the west, but when it veered round to the south-west, and again to south, laden as she was with lumber, she was inclined to be crank, and was lying far over to it, and some canvas had to come in.

The mainsail, which had already been reefed, was in process of being furled, and the weather side had been hauled up, when a big sea came on board at the waist and swept as far as the poop, while the ship heeled over until the whole of the lee deck was under water. The men were singing out at the lee buntlines and clew garnets, but the singing ceased at once, and there was no sound but the frantic thrashing of the mainsail.

"Why don't you quieten that sail—you'll lose it yet!" sang out the captain, and presently the men were soon crying out once more at the lee gear.

A couple of minutes later Mr. Croad, the mate, came running towards the poop, shouting as he ran that two men were missing.

Lifebuoys were thrown overboard, and the ship brought to the wind as soon as possible. The crew were then asked if they would be willing to man a lifeboat, and one and all refused. Had they been willing they would not have been allowed to go. The ship was making fifteen knots at the time the men were lost, which must have been at the moment the big sea was shipped, several minutes before they were missed. In their oilskins and seaboots they must have been drowned almost at once, and in any event a boat could not have lived in the heavy sea which was running.

This point—the lowering of boats upon such



occasions—is one of those upon which a good deal of sentimental and ignorant nonsense is often talked by those knowing nothing about the subject. People will consider it a heartless act to sail on and “leave a man to drown.” But in heavy weather, hard though it may seem, it is the only thing to be done.

To pick up a man lost overboard was perhaps specially difficult in the days of flying kites. A ship carrying a heavy press of canvas—stunsails and what not—could not be brought up to the wind suddenly without running a very serious risk of being dismasted. I remember hearing a very sad instance of this kind. A boy had been sent aloft to overhaul the gear on the maintopmast stunsail boom, and while there by some means or other he lost his hold and fell clear of the rail into the sea.

No one saw him fall but the man at the wheel, and the captain was amazed to see him suddenly give the helm to him and jump into the water. The ship was brought up to the wind as soon as possible, and a boat lowered, the weather being quite fine; but nothing could be done, nor was anything seen of either man or boy.

And if such were the case in fine weather, picture the hopelessness of an attempted rescue in a storm when a big ship was herself hard put to it to resist the onslaughts of wind and sea.

A curious point which is worth mentioning in this connexion is the deliberate refusal of the old-fashioned shellback to learn to swim. The odd, cheerful fatalism of the sailorman had no doubt its share in it, but he had perhaps a rough sort of logic on his side. He knew well that in nine cases out of ten, if he should happen to fall into the “drink,” there was but a slender chance of his being rescued; so he preferred the certainty of



drowning quickly to the prolongation of the agony by a futile fight for life. Probably superstition rather than logic, however, governed his decision. To learn to swim was "tempting Providence," "asking for trouble." I once came across a Cornishman, an old Sou' Spanier, and coxswain of the local lifeboat, who calmly boasted that "water couldn't drown" him. He went locally by the sobriquet of "Splash"—perhaps on account of the number of times he had tested the truth of his theory.

Many as are the skilled craftsmen for whom the modern steamship affords a sphere of activity, it is none the less a sad fact that the present day can show no class of men comparable to the petty officers and seacraftsmen of the days of sail.

Seamen seldom stayed by one ship very long: not often for more than one voyage, very seldom indeed for more than two. It has ever been Merchant Jack's habit to like a change. But sailmakers, carpenters, and bos'ns often remained in one ship longer than her mates—longer even than her captains. One still comes across them now and again, old men of the fast-dying type of sturdy independence that scorned doles or charity. There was an old man known as "Honest John," who died quite recently in Limehouse, who had served as sailmaker for many years in the old "La Hogue," and could do a job of work as well as the next man up to the time of his death. And I remember coming across an old sailmaker in a Southampton sail loft who had weathered the Horn eighteen times in the long-vanished sailing-fleet of the New Zealand Shipping Company, whose Maori names are still kept up by the steamers which have succeeded them under the same house-flag.

The "City of Agra's" bos'n, Thomas Felix, was a

fine example of this vanished type of seafaring man. He was a native of Machynnleth, in Wales ; and, by the way, it is a curious fact that statistics prove the Principality to have provided a larger number of officers of the Merchant Service than either England, Scotland, or Ireland. Personally, I should have thought from observation that Scotland had all the other partners beaten to a frazzle. But statistics are queer things.

He was Welsh through and through, but showed none of the clannishness or racial prejudice one associates with the Scot and the Irishman. In fact, with him (possibly he wanted to demonstrate his fair-mindedness) the prejudice was rather in the other direction, and he generally gave any other Welshman who happened to be on board a very warm time. He had the sailor's characteristic aversion for thrift, and never felt quite happy if he had a sovereign left in his pocket when the ship sailed. He could read and write after a fashion, but—like some much better-educated people—the difficulty with him lay in deciphering what he had written when he came to render his accounts of ships' stores, such as rope and canvas, paints and oil.

. . . . .

One of the old ship's finest performances was her outward passage to Melbourne in 1881, when she arrived sixty-nine days out from the Lizard, neck and neck with the "Theophane," another veteran, whose maiden passage of sixty-six days is a very famous one.

It is a strange and a pathetic coincidence that so

many of these old ships, when they were drawing near their end, seemed to take on a new lease of life, and to rival once again the brave deeds of their prime ; as if in some way they felt within them that their day was over, and thus sent forth a last challenge to fate.

She was sold to the Norwegians in 1882. Captain Young, when he bade her farewell, patted her sides and said, " Good-bye, old dear ! " It is a bitter thing to a sailor to part with a ship he has loved. She takes with her so much of his life, so much of his strength and service, of his dreams and memories. She may be only some ugly, unlovely old tramp, much cursed and abused so long as she was a part of to-day ; but even so there is a pang at parting. Always there is the lump in the throat, the break in the voice. Always there is the sense of loss, of transiency, of regret.

Once, in after years, he was to meet his old ship again. It was after he had, as the saying used to go, " given up the sea and gone into steamboats." " A sailing ship coming up astern, sir," the officer on duty announced one morning. Captain Young didn't want to see her. His heart was in sail still, and it was as yet something of a pang to see a sailing vessel at sea. But his one perfunctory glance at the stranger had suggested something familiar about her. Presently the officer of the watch came to him again.

" That sailing vessel has hoisted her name and number, sir." It was the old " City of Agra."

She was wrecked off Cape Sable in March, 1907, when on passage from New York to Bridgwater, being then forty-seven years old. Her career was perhaps one more of steady and sterling service than of sensational achievements. Few people outside nautical circles ever heard of her. But she was a fine old

ship, and her life was somehow very like that of the average shellback of bygone days—a life of many voyages, of many ports and seas seen and sailed, of escapades and adventures, and of an unknown and unrewarded end.

. . . . .

#### NOTE

It may be of interest—by way of contrast with modern facilities for handling cargo—to describe the precise method adopted in the “City of Agra” of discharging the locomotives mentioned on page 133.

The requisite gear comprised a couple of coils of five-inch Manila rope, four thirty-inch fourfold blocks and two single blocks of the same size, and four three-fold eighteen-inch blocks and a number of single ones.

The tow-line was passed round the fore- and maintopmast heads, a preventer forestay and cap backstay being rigged at the main. The mainyard was untrussed and lashed securely to the mast, a double purchase to the maintopmast head acting as a preventer lift. A spare spar was then lashed two-thirds out on the mainyard. One big block was lashed to the tow-rope above the main hatch, and another at the junction of the spare spar and the mainyard, and the tackles rove. The engines were hove up by the capstan windlass: and a rare lot of shantying it must have required to get them up and into the lighters,

II. SOME OLD LOG-BOOKS. THE CLIPPER SHIP  
" CIMBA "

In the days of the China tea fleet, the annual race home with the season's teas was one of the sporting events of the year. It was discussed in circles not even remotely nautical as keenly as a classic event upon the Turf or an international prize-fight. Sober business men gambled on it as on the Derby or the Grand National; and in remote country villages far from the roar of the sea the chances of the most notable contestants were eagerly canvassed by men who had, perhaps, never set eyes upon the English Channel, let alone the China Seas.<sup>1</sup>

After the passing of the tea fleet interest languished to a certain extent so far as the general public was concerned. But in nautical circles everywhere the performances of the wool clippers took the place of those of the tea clippers.

The approach of Christmas was marked by an atmosphere of tense excitement in the London offices of the big shipping firms in the Australian trade, for with the New Year the first news of the vanguard of the wool fleet might be soon expected from the Lizard. Once the Lizard was signalled by an incoming wool clipper the race was really over. Her cargo was entered for the next sales, and even if—as not infrequently happened—contrary winds or fogs in the Channel kept her beating about for a fortnight or

<sup>1</sup> The memory of America's recent challenge to British supremacy at sea was still comparatively recent, which may in part explain why the exploits of the China tea fleet touched the rather sluggish imagination of the race as perhaps no nautical—as distinct from naval—event has done before or since.



more it made no difference so far as the sales were concerned.

Some ships, and even more perhaps some captains, might always be looked for in the first flight. They might be relied on, unless under exceptionally adverse conditions, to get home in from eighty to a hundred days. Others were as inevitably long on the road. If they did it in a hundred and ten days they felt like hustlers!

The excitement communicated itself even to the humblest and youngest members of the staff; and the office boy of the Aberdeen White Star Line, when an errand took him Blackwall way, would turn aside to trail his coat tails for Green's or Shaw Savill's junior representative to tread upon, with the result that one or both of the combatants bit, if not the dust, at any rate the mud of Poplar.

Racing—real racing—at sea may be said to have died out with the wool fleet. The last pale shadows of it lived on for a little in the Frisco grain trade, mostly among ships and captains who still kept up the traditions of their Australian heyday, after the remnant of the wool fleet deserted Sydney and Melbourne for the Pacific Coast. But that, too, passed; and with it came the end of racing among ships.

Individual rivalries lingered here and there as long as sail endured, more, perhaps, among apprentices than anywhere else. One of those "Inver" barques—fine ships and good to look upon, but in no sense of the word clippers—had just sailed from Belfast for Sydney (it would be in the early years of the present century), when the mate came to the captain with a Belfast paper in which it was stated that he had challenged the captain of the "Port Jackson," loading at the same time in London, to race him out to Sydney. The captain stared.

"Do you know how the 'Port Jackson' can sail?" he asked.

The mate shook his head.

"Well, she could sail rings round this ship," replied the captain.

It turned out that the challenge was between the apprentices of the two ships, and it seemed to the captain of the "Inver" so absurd that he thought no more about it.

However, as it turned out the "Port Jackson"—a far faster ship—only arrived six hours before the "Inver," and the owners of the latter were so pleased that they sent the captain a cable of congratulation. As for the apprentices, no doubt they had their triumph and possibly their collisions with the "Port Jackson's" brass-bound contingent when they got ashore.

Australians a generation ago had the strong gambling instinct which is present in all young nations; and this combined with a very general interest in shipping to make feeling run very high regarding the wool races. Many and many a good pound changed hands when two well-known rivals were matched together, such as the "Pericles," and "Brilliant," or the "Miltiades" and the "Cimba."

The pretty little Aberdeen clipper "Cimba" was probably one of the best-known ships sailing out of Sydney. "Cimba" is an African word meaning "lion," and it was through a member of the Nicol family, who owned the ship, reading an incident in the life of Livingstone, of whom he was a great admirer, that it came to be chosen as the name of the new clipper. The story was to the effect that Livingstone was about to be attacked by a lion, and that his native boys came to him crying out in alarm, "Cimba! Cimba!" The incident took the reader's

fancy, and he determined then and there that "Cimba" his new ship should be. The name was more appropriate than it appears at first glance, for the lion, the emblem of Scotland, was also displayed on the Nicol house-flag.

Her figure-head was a particularly fine one—a large lion with four small ones in attendance—and when the ship was in dock, with her soaring bowsprit and fine bow projecting over the roadway, all the passers-by used to look up and admire it. A handsome lion, an imposing lion, especially when he had a fresh coat of bronze paint to set him off—not like the funny little "rompin' kitlin'" (chocolate, with a red tongue and a grinning row of white teeth) which I saw not long ago on the bow of the Finnish barque "Fjong" in the Surrey Docks.

The "Cimba," like the "Miltiades," her great rival, came from Aberdeen, from Hood's famous yard. She was heavily sparred, with an eighty-foot main- and a forty-foot royal-yard, a tonnage of a little over 1,100, and a length of 223 feet. She was built in 1878, and remained under her original house-flag until 1905. She was one of "Cutty Sark's" foremost competitors in the wool trade, and I have heard the story told that her commander, no mean artist, once painted a picture in which the "Cimba" was delineated bowling along with everything set, and the "Cutty Sark" in the offing, shortened down. What the "Cutty Sark's" skipper said when he saw the picture, if he ever did see it, is not on record. But it is safe to surmise that his language must have been "both painful and free!"

Smartness in port was always a characteristic of an Aberdeen clipper, and the "Cimba" was no exception to the rule. Indeed, so spick and span was her

appearance that, when she was in Brisbane on one of her voyages at the same time as Lord Brassey's famous cruising yacht "Sunbeam," the then Governor of Queensland expressed his opinion that she was "smarter than Brassey's yacht."

During twenty-nine years sailing between London and Sydney her average passage was eighty-nine days—the time, curiously enough, of her maiden run. Her first commander was Captain Fimister, an Aberdonian, who had her until 1895, and got some fine passages out of her, among them one of seventy-five days from Sydney to London in 1889. Her best outward passage during her whole career was in 1880, when she and the Aberdeen White Star clipper "Samuel Plimsoll" were both seventy-two days out, and "The Tweed," then getting near her end, seventy-five.

In 1895 Captain Holmes took over the command of the "Cimba." It was decidedly the exception for the captain of an Aberdeen crack to be other than a Scot, and Captain Holmes was one of the exceptions, coming of old Kentish seafaring stock, such as the seaboard around Deal and Dover is renowned for producing.

He owns to having felt more than a little put on his mettle when he stepped into Captain Fimister's shoes, for he knew that the eyes of the rest of the wool fleet would be upon him, and should by any chance the "Cimba" fail to keep up her reputation the clannish Aberdeen skippers would assuredly not fail to comment upon it.

The "Cimba's" first two voyages out of Sydney after Captain Holmes took her over, he set the main to'ga'n's'l leaving Sydney and took it in for the first time off Dungeness—which may be taken as a proof

that Captain Holmes was capable of maintaining the old "cracking on" tradition of the wool trade.

He was no stranger to speedy ships, for among those in which he had seen service were some of the fastest and finest ships of the great age of sail, among them being the "Salamis," one of the most beautiful of the iron clippers built for the Aberdeen White Star Line—"a flower of a ship," is Captain Holmes's description of her—the two London built iron tea clippers "Blackadder" and "Hallowe'en," the former renowned in her early career as one of the most unlucky ships ever known, the latter a wonderful passage-maker in the last days of the tea trade; and the "Leucadia," a fine ship, also built for the tea trade in its closing years.

The "Leucadia," like the "Cimba," was noted for her very fine figure-head, which in her case represented Sappho with her lyre. The lyre was strung with gilt wire, and—together with the poetess's arms—was taken off for reasons of safety while the ship was in port.

I have before me, as I write, Captain Holmes's abstract logs of several of the "Cimba's" voyages, right up to the last she made under the British flag, as well as that of the "Leucadia" the voyage before he left her.

The "Leucadia" was also an Aberdeen ship, and, although her name is all but forgotten, that she was a ship which could sail is proved by some of her days' runs. From Adelaide to Auckland her twenty-four hours' distances included one of 240 and others of 237, 226, and 222 miles.

Homeward from Auckland she encountered regular "Cape Stiff" weather. "Strong breeze and gale with hail squalls"; "strong gale"; "heavy beam sea";



"strong gale and hail squalls—carried away main topsail yard"; "fresh gale and thick rainy weather"; "strong gale and lightning"; "strong gale, heavy sea"; "strong breeze, thick, dirty weather"; "thick fog—later fresh gale and rainy"; "fresh gale—heavy hail squalls—tremendous sea"; "thick, rainy weather—sighted Diego Ramirez"; "wind hauling west and blowing strong"; "tacked off Staten Island—thick and foggy"; "lots of icebergs (in 43 south latitude)—at night hard gale." Such are the phrases which stand out from the pages of the log while the ship was in the vicinity of the Horn, and they paint a sufficient picture of a typical rounding of that stormy headland—such an experience as, to the seaman of a few years hence, will be no more than an empty name.

Nine degrees south of the line the "Leucadia" signalled the "Duntrune," which had been in collision with ice. The "Duntrune" was a well-known Dundee built clipper, sister ship to the perhaps more famous "Maulesden."

There had been a great deal of ice encountered this year in the South Atlantic, and the "Cromdale" and "Strathdon," as well as the big "Liverpool," were among the other ships which reported having been in the midst of it. The "Cromdale" was embayed, and succeeded in getting clear of it only to come to an ignominious end a few years later on the coast of Cornwall. I have a photograph of her on the rocks at Bass Point. Poor soul! she does not look in the least like a wreck. She ran ashore hard and fast in a fog, with all sail set, and could not be got off.

The "Cimba's" first voyage under her new captain's command was her usual run from London to Sydney,

there to load with wool, and so home by way of the Horn in time for the January sales.

She left the South-West India Dock on April 8, 1895, and towed down to Gravesend. There was a light breeze and thick fog. At six the following morning the tug left her, and she was five days tacking about between Dungeness and the Start, where she was becalmed for six hours. At night the wind, which had been light, increased, and she took departure from the Lizard at 8.30 in the morning.

A fresh breeze, shattering the wave-crests into foam, sped her on her way, and—with a greeting waved in the spring sunset to the New Zealand “Akaroa”—she was away on her long run, southward ho !

In spite of heavy head seas she continued to make fair daily runs until Madeira was sighted on the eighth day out. There the wind fell away altogether, and during the six succeeding days the “Cimba’s” daily progress was never more than seventy-three miles, and twice under thirty. No wonder that after a week of this, Madeira all the while hanging on the horizon like a nightmare, the log breaks forth into the exasperated comment, “Too bad to write about” !

On the thirteenth day a breeze at last came away from the west-north-west, and the day’s run was 202 miles. At two in the afternoon of the same day the “Cimba” passed and signalled the barque “Dr. Siegert,” thirty days out from Bremen for Trinidad. This ship was originally the New Zealand Shipping Company’s “Otaki,” which made a very remarkable passage of sixty-nine days from Port Chalmers, during four days of which she was becalmed off the coast of New Zealand.

Nearing the Line the usual doldrum weather—calm with variable airs—prevailed, and in latitude 2°4



"IN UPPER TOPSAILS!"



north, with a strong northerly current of thirty miles, the "Cimba's" progress was only six miles in the twenty-four hours. Six degrees below the Line conditions began to improve, and she made several daily runs of over 200 miles, on a course south by west, aided by a strong westerly current.

She had very poor Trades right through, and it was not until she began to enter the kingdom of the brave west winds that the little ship had a chance to show her new captain what she could do. In the thirty-ninth parallel she registered a run of 316 miles, the weather being at first rainy, with a strong wind, which later fell off, when it became clear and almost calm.

In "40 south" a fresh breeze increased to a strong gale with heavy sea, and the "Cimba's" mainsail had to come in. The wind continued to increase to a full gale, and on the third day she made a run of 302 miles. The same day the log records the fact that the second mate was lost overboard.

In the Forties she made several runs of over 300 miles, the particulars of which follow:

*June 8th.*

Lat.	Long.	Distance.	Remarks.
37°47' S.	46°30' E.	308 miles.	Fresh gale and heavy sea. Noon, strong and cloudy. Later, fresh and showery.

*June 16th.*

43°5' S.	71°48' E.	302 miles.	Fresh, northerly, and cloudy. Noon, ditto and rainy. Later, strong and cloudy.
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*June 18th.*

44°36' S.	84°52' E.	300 miles.	Strong breeze and cloudy.
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On this day was sighted a ship believed to be the "Militiades," which had been signalled in the Channel at the commencement of the voyage.

Lat.	Long.	Distance.	Remarks.
<i>June 23rd.</i>			
42° 31' S.	108° 59' E.	312 miles.	Strong gale and squally. Noon, fresh and clear. Later, ditto, and hail squalls.

Sydney Light was sighted on July 4th, at four in the morning, and at eight the "Cimba" arrived in Sydney, after a passage of eighty-two days, which would beyond a doubt have been very much shorter had it not been for her unusually bad luck in what should have been the Trade belts, both north and south of the Line.

The "Cimba," as this log goes to bear out, was undoubtedly a ship which was at her best in easting weather, like the typical iron wool clipper, although she could also go well on a bowline.

She left Sydney for London on the return passage on October 16th, and completed the passage in ninety-one days. This seems to have been one of those cycles of uncertain Trades such as has been commented upon by various writers in the daily papers during the past year or two. Some of these commentators have worked up a very ingenious and alarming theory on the subject, to the effect that American railway operations near Key West have interfered with the course of the Gulf Stream, and that England may be expected in due time to become a second Labrador! But there is really not much need for alarm. The Trades have had a habit of not turning up invariably

when expected as long as there have been ships to wait upon their pleasure.

Not that the failure of the Trades would have the same significance to-day as in the days of sail. Weather, of course, still continues to matter to the steamboat man, but in a far less vital degree and in a different way. Pleasant, steady, reliable winds such as may be looked for in the Trade zones are as welcome to the steamer as to the sailing vessel.

But, generally speaking, a "good Trade" has not for the seaman of to-day the same meaning that it had for the old shellback of days gone by.

It was in the Trades that the windjammer sailor was in his glory. The Forties were where the records were made. They had a splendour of their own, those high south latitudes; but it was a cruel splendour. To the seaman they meant discomfort, arduous and killing toil, and danger in bitter seas. It was the Tropics, the "flying fish weather," that paid for all.

Then it was that the shellback enjoyed life. He forgot the hardships of the past, the hardships yet to come. No hoarse cry of "All hands!" broke in upon his scanty leisure and his brief sleep. No weary hauling of yards to the baffling and capricious airs of the doldrums, that died away almost as soon as they had arisen. No battling with frozen canvas off the pitch of the Horn. The present was his, and it was good; and Merchant Jack, always a bit of a fatalist—as how could he help but be?—never met trouble half-way.

Every one was in a good humour, from the Old Man downwards. Not a brace or a halyard need be touched while the long hours sped by, the steady Trade wind droning through the royals, the small, white fleecy

'Trade clouds' strung out like a flock of sheep along the skyline, the ship snoring through it at a steady fourteen or fifteen knots, with the Liverpool girls at the end of her tow-rope.

Then it was, in the pleasant dog-watches, that models were brought forth to be completed, that ships were cunningly inserted into bottles, that sennet mats were made, that chests were fitted with fancy shackles, and the portraits of "last ships" of unimagined and impossible tallness and beauty painted inside their lids. Then, too, were yarns spun and songs sung—the interminable yarns and as interminable songs which delighted the soul of the real old Sou' Spainer—such songs as "The Stately Southerner" or "The Flash Packet" or the sad ballad of "Admiral Benbow"—old "Sails," meantime, spectacles on nose, sitting on the fore-hatch patching away at a sail, repairing the damage wrought aloft by the playfulness of the stormy westerlies. Then did the more thrifty souls among the crew provide against harder times to come by patching up their leaky oilskins and sea-boots and making ready "soul-and-body" lashings. The rest were content to fill the part of the foolish virgins, and face the cold and wet unprovided with any extra protection, relying either upon the kindness of their shipmates when the time came or the resources of the "slop chest."

The slop chest is one of those maritime institutions which passed away with the crimp and the pierhead jump into the limbo of the past. In those days it was a necessity for humane reasons. When a man came on board—or was dumped on board blind drunk—with less than could be carried in a bundle handkerchief to carry him through a voyage that might last two or three years, he had by some means to be fitted out against the bitter weather.

There were of course many cases where the institution of the slop chest, like most of the machinery devised by man, was sadly abused. Skippers, after all, are human beings ; and a system which invited the captain to make what he could out of the slop chest, and put him in the position of a shopkeeper possessing an absolute monopoly, was a positive invitation to avarice.

Very often, on the other hand, the slop chest charges were not at all exorbitant, while in many instances its contents were of greatly better quality than those palmed off upon their victims by the sharks of sailortown.

And now to return to the "Cimba," whose Trades on this occasion were not to be found. In the region where they should have been gladdening the seaman's heart and making his life worth living the "Cimba's" log shows such significant entries as "calms and light variable airs"; "tacking repeatedly"; "baffles and calms"; "very variable and calm"; and at last (a veritable *cri de cœur*) "maddening"! About this time the "Cimba" was in company for five days with the "Glenorchy" (Iquique to Hamburg), one of those Scottish "Glens" which were of the type of ship then supplanting the wool clippers; but on the sixth day, a light breeze springing up, the "Glenorchy" was soon hull down astern.

Other ships spoken were the barque "Astoria" of Liverpool, also bound to Hamburg from the nitrate fields, a German five-master (possibly the "R.C. Rickmers" or the ill-fated "Preussen," which hung herself up outside Dover a few years later), the German barques "Anna" and "J. C. Pfluger," and some others unnamed, the "Allerton" of Liverpool, and

the wool clippers "Thessalus," "Argonaut," and "Trafalgar."

I remember seeing that same little "Anna"—I think it must have been the same, though no doubt the name is a common one enough among ships as among women—I remember seeing her, a year or two before the war, lying in one of those mouldy looking little hidden-away ponds of the London Docks, so surrounded by wharves and warehouses that one could hardly imagine how a ship ever got herself into it, let alone getting herself out. She was a pretty, rather forlorn-looking little ship. I wonder what the war did for her—whether she was interned like other *Fräuleins*—whether an appealing, captive look about her was prophetic? . . .

The "Thessalus" and "Argonaut" were among the cracks of the wool fleet. They were both owned by Carmichael of the "Golden Fleece" house-flag. "Thessalus" on this occasion completed her voyage in seventy-five days from Sydney to the Start, while "Argonaut" for some reason—possibly bad weather in the Channel—was over a hundred days on the way.

The "Trafalgar" is one of those ships about which very little seems to be known. I rather fancy this must have been the same ship—though there have been more "Trafalgars" than one—which was owned by D. Rose & Company, and was once brought into Sydney by her senior apprentice, all her officers having died on the voyage.

Between 20 and 30 north latitude there was the same weary waiting for the elusive Trades. "Light puffy, variable airs," "baffling on every tack" are characteristic entries in the log; and what incessant pully-hauling this meant for the crew any old seaman well knows.



She signalled the "Lizard" at eight in the morning of January 17th, and docked two days later. Her maintopsail was never in the whole way from Sydney.

She sailed again from London on the last day of March, 1896, and on the tenth day from departure rather an interesting entry appears: "Lots of red dust." This dust was presumably carried from some volcanic eruption, and was probably a similar phenomenon to the "May dust" from La Soufriere which has provided Jamaica with most of its fertile soil, or to the "red snow" of which accounts appear in the papers from time to time.

Among the ships spoken on this passage was the celebrated Aberdeen White Star clipper "Patriarch," that magnificent iron vessel whose average for three consecutive Sydney voyages was seventy-eight days. On one of these voyages she was only nineteen days to the Line, and had reached 20 degrees south before the "dead horse" was up. The "Patriarch" also made the record sailing ship passage of sixty-eight days from Sydney Heads to the West India Dock.

And here perhaps one may be permitted to digress a little on the subject of the "dead horse," that time-honoured windjammer ceremony which has provided a phrase that will probably be part of the current coin of our daily speech long after the last of the windjammers has vanished from the seas.

Every one knows the meaning of "working off a dead horse," that is, doing the work after one has drawn the pay. But not all, possibly, know the origin of the expression.

The seaman, on signing the ship's articles, received—or for that matter still receives—an advance of a month's pay. This advance note in the old days generally went into the maw of the rapacious scoundrels

who batted upon the simplicity and thriftlessness of the old type of shellback. Naturally, it was not at any time given to the sailor in money, since, human nature being what it is, the possibility would have had to be reckoned with of his not turning up at all on sailing day. It was therefore made negotiable at a date after the ship had sailed, and it was out of cashing these advance notes that boarding-house masters and similar parasites made a good part of their money.

The ceremony of "heaving out the dead horse" marked the day when the month for which the sailor had already received his money—or the equivalent, if not the worth, of it—came to an end. From that day on he could feel that he was no longer working off his "dead horse," but for something which was still to come to him and not already spent.

The "dead horse"—sometimes quite an elaborate sort of pantomime animal, sometimes a mere shapeless mass of tarred canvas stuffed with straw and "shakings"—was constructed in readiness for the great occasion, and in the first dog-watch on the evening of the day it was hauled forth, dragged in procession round the deck, hauled up to the main yardarm, and solemnly committed to the deep, to the accompaniment of the appropriate ditty and rousing yells and cheers.

The song is one with several versions ; in its simplest form it was merely :

Poor old man, your horse will die—  
And they *say* so—and they *hope* so ;  
Oh, poor old man, your horse will die—  
Oh, poor old man. . . .

This strange, vague figure of the "poor old man" crops up in quite a number of shanties, including that

very fine one with the amazingly senseless words, "Johnny come back to Hilo." But who the nameless ancient is supposed to be no one can tell. Perhaps students of folk-lore might trace in him some resemblance to Manannan in Irish legend, or to that equally mysterious being, Davy Jones.

Sometimes the "horse" was set on fire before it went over; sometimes a blue light, fired simultaneously, provided the necessary pyrotechnic effect. I rather wonder that no one has ever painted a picture of the scene. There would be a fine subject in it—the group of excited faces lighted up by the glare of the burning effigy, backed by a network of ropes and rigging dark against a quiet tropic evening sky.

Captain Whall gives another verse of the song just quoted :

Then if he dies I'll tan his hide—  
And they say so—and they hope so ;  
And if he lives I'll ride him again—  
Oh, poor old man !

as well as a sort of recitative which preceded the final act of the drama :

Old horse, old horse, what brought you here,  
After carrying sand for many a year,  
From Bantry Bay to Ballywhack,  
Where you fell down and broke your back ?  
Now, after years of such abuse,  
They salt you down for sailors' use,  
They tan your hide and burn your bones,  
And send you off to Davy Jones.

What link there is between this apostrophe and the sailor's advance note it is hard to say. I have seen the verse given as a song used when getting stores up

from the hold, and it would certainly seem more appropriate in that connexion. Perhaps, on the other hand, the whole idea of the "dead horse" ceremony is that the sailor has for the first month worked for his ration of "salt horse" only.

Another writer (the late Mr. J. E. Patterson) gives a quite different version. The hauling part in his form goes :

Now the old horse is dead—

*Heave him out !*

Now the old horse is dead and done—

*Heave the old horse out !*

We gave him a month of our daily bread—

*Heave him out !*

We gave him a month of our bread and beef—

*Heave the old horse out !*

He was a horse that was good and true—

*Heave him out !*

He was a horse that did his bit—

*Heave the old horse out !*

He never kicked an' he never shied—

*Heave him out !*

He ate our bread, and now he's died—

*Heave the old horse out !*

The recitative, too, is quite different :

O, aye, my bonnies—

The poor old horse he's dead and done,

We gave him bread and beef and bone—

Oh, aye, my bonnies ;

But now he's dead and damned he goes

Over the side where no one knows—

Oh, aye, my bonnies—

concluding with another verse of the shanty :

He's dead and damned, so let him go—

*Heave him out !*

He's dead and damned whether he will or no—

*Heave the old horse out !*

Right through the Trades the winds were again variable and baffling, and the "Cimba" was never able to make much of a run until she fell in with her friends the westerlies. For seventeen days after she got into the Forties her day's run was only once under 200 miles, and was several times nearly 300.

She arrived in Sydney eighty-nine days out, on July 1st.

Her next homeward passage was one of her best, being seventy-five days to the Lizard and seventy-eight to London. Her longest day's run was one of 316 miles in 51 south latitude and the little clipper's favourite weather—"strong gale, in royals." Going up to the Line she spoke the "Invergarry," which was destined to be another of her captain's commands in the future. Most of the time she kept steadily going at over 200 miles a day.

Her next voyage was to Brisbane, but she had a very bad passage and took one hundred and ten days on the way. Two days after taking departure from the Lizard a heavy gale with high seas and a strong easterly current retarded her progress for nearly a week. She picked up the north-east Trades about the twenty-ninth parallel, and made fair progress till she lost them again two degrees north of the Line. Near the Line two ships were spoken, the "Creedmore" of St. John, New Brunswick, and the "Strathdon." The latter name was borne by several ships of the Aberdeen White Star Line in succession; the one in question would be the iron ship built by Harland & Wolff for



the wool trade, though she was not strictly speaking in the clipper class. By this time carrying capacity in ships had begun to count far more than speed. She is still afloat, or was until quite recently, under French ownership and the name of "Gers."

In 6°14 south occurs the brief entry, "Shark," which to the old windjammer sailor will call up many recollections. The shark to the sailor was—and is—a deadly and hated enemy, and when caught (the usual method being by means of a hook baited with meat and trailed astern) he received scant mercy. One has heard grisly stories of the contents of the creatures' stomachs when they were opened. Sometimes rather cold-blooded cruelties were perpetrated on the wretched captives, but such performances were not generally countenanced in British ships, and were more often than not the work of foreigners.

I have heard well-authenticated cases where the shark's heart, having been cut out, continued to beat for hours on the ship's rail exposed to the tropic sun. The superstition was that it "could not die till sunset," a curious and very widespread legend regarding reptiles. I remember once being solemnly assured by a young Worcestershire soldier who was in the trenches at Gallipoli that the snakes they used to kill there did not die: "They went on scrawlin'—they couldn't die till dark."

The shark dead provided numerous attractive "curios" such as the shellback loved. His backbone was much coveted for making walking-sticks, his teeth for pipe-stems, his skin for a sort of emery paper. A shark's tail or fin was a very usual adornment at the jibboom end of a windjammer, where it was believed to bring luck, as well as proclaiming the ship to be a Sou' Spainer. I believe some kind of secret

and unclean magical rite, rather like that associated with the mandrake in the days of mediaeval witchcraft, has its root in the formation of the shark's skull which is supposed to bear a resemblance to a woman's body.

On the homeward passage the "Cimba's" time was ninety-eight days. She made several good runs off the Horn, including one of 308 miles in dirty, squally weather, with the glass very low. Towards the beginning of the voyage she spoke the "Argonaut" and the celebrated White Star clipper "Samuel Plimsoll."

Her passages, both out and home, from 1898 to 1900 call for no particular comment. Alternate calms and contrary winds lengthened her passages out to a hundred days and over, and it was not until 1901 that she had another good run of eighty-five days. When in 46 south she did a day's work of 200 miles *on a wind*, and a furious gale of wind at that. On the homeward run (ninety-six days) she was only twenty-five days from the Horn to the Line, though the fact that she was thirteen days from Sydney to the Snares kept her back at the start.

Her next passage to Brisbane was just over the hundred days. She was only twenty-eight days from the Equator to Cape Pillar, but at the end of the passage a strong southerly current was encountered, against which she could only make one degree of northing in five days.

The "Cimba" now made a run to the Chile coast in ballast. Sailing for Talcahuano at the end of February, she arrived after an uneventful passage of forty-five days, and went on to Valparaiso to load for Liverpool, reaching the latter port in eighty-two days.

Old Cape Stiff was in one of his boisterous moods, and as the high latitudes were reached the ship met mountainous seas, heavy gales, snow and thick weather. At 54 south, off the pitch of the Horn, she passed the ship "Thirlmere" with mainmast gone, but requiring no assistance.

This "Thirlmere" would no doubt be a sister ship to the "Buttermere," which, owned in Norway and under the name of "Pax," was in the Surrey Docks not long ago. She is one of the few old windjammers whose present condition is not such as to make her bygone captains and mates turn in their graves.

After this digression we find the old clipper once again back to her familiar stamping ground. She sailed from Liverpool to Sydney in ninety-one days, and her topgallant sails were never in from the Channel until the seventy-eighth day out.

Homeward she had very bad weather off the Horn. "Thick fog—tried for Straits, too thick to see," "Tried twice at Straits—no go," are among the entries in her log. She was one hundred and fourteen days to Falmouth.

Newcastle, N.S.W., was her next port of destination, and, sailing from London in November, she made it in ninety-five days, having been two days in a hurricane under bare poles while running the easting down.

After a passage of one hundred and two days Sydney to London she sailed for Sydney for the last time under the British flag. Leaving the Lizard on November 17th, she got out in eighty-seven days, twice exceeding 300 miles in twenty-four hours, although by this time signs were not lacking that the old ship had seen her best days. The following account of this last passage is taken from a Sydney paper :—

" After another highly creditable run from London, the ship 'Cimba,' a frequent visitor to this port, arrived last night with a cargo of general merchandise, and anchored at ten o'clock in Watson's Bay. The 'Cimba' left the South West India Dock at 5 p.m. on November 12th, and anchored two hours later below Gravesend. On Monday, November 14, a hundred tons of powder was taken in, and the vessel got under way the following day, with foggy weather. The tug was cast off near Dungeness at midnight. Light northerly winds prevailed in the Channel, and the Lizard was passed at 9 p.m. on the 17th.

" Moderate weather was then experienced till near Madeira, on November 25th, when a hard south-south-westerly gale came on, blowing for three days, during which the ship made very little progress. The 'Cimba' passed inside the Cape Verd Islands on December 4th. The north-east Trades lasted to lat. 5 deg. north, and long. 23 west, where the south-east Trades were picked up.<sup>1</sup> St. Paul's Rocks were passed on the 11th, and the Equator was crossed that night in long. 30 west.

" Fernando Noronha was passed on December 13th, and the south-east Trades gave out in lat. 16 south and long. 33 west on December 18th. . . . The meridian of Greenwich was passed on January 2nd, and the Cape on January 6th, fifty days out. Fresh to strong winds, with unsettled weather and low barometer, lasted to the Leeuwin, which was made on January 25th, sixty-nine days out.

" On January 30th the winds got very light, and on the 2nd inst. the 'Cimba' passed four miles off the Eddystone Rock. A north-easter then set in lasting

<sup>1</sup> There seems to be a mistake here. What were the south-east Trades doing north of the Line?

for three days. The ship did not get clear of Tasmania till the 5th, when the wind shifted to the westward for two days and then veered to the northward. After another three days beating with strong northerly winds the 'Cimba' made Shoalhaven on Saturday. At 11 a.m. yesterday, February 12th, the wind shifted to the southward and carried the ship to port. The 'Cimba' was towed in by the tug 'Advance.' "

It was to be her last run to Sydney under the British flag.

She went over from Newcastle to Callao in sixty days, and from Callao to Iquique she made the record sailing ship passage of fourteen days.

Her career under the Red Duster was now drawing to its close. She sailed from Caleta Buena for Falmouth for orders, and completed the passage in ninety days.

She was sold to the Norwegians in Rotterdam in 1906. "It was like drawing teeth to part with her," says her old captain. But her day was done. The new order had no room for such as her.

She served her new masters well and faithfully, continuing to make good passages right up to the last. She vanished from the seas some time since—a good little ship, an honest little ship, of whom nothing remains but the heel of her bowsprit, her royal yard, and the mast of one of her lifeboats, which have been put together to make a flagstaff for her old captain.

### III. THE ABERDEEN CLIPPER "MILTIADES"

The "Cimba" and "Miltiades" were great rivals, and plenty of money must have been lost and won over their performances at one time and another.

The "Miltiades" (built in 1871 by Hood of Aberdeen)



was intended for the emigrant trade, but it was in the wool fleet that she was best known, although she generally carried a few passengers as long as she remained under the Thompson house-flag. She was a ship of about 1,500 tons, and—like all the fair ladies of the White Star Line—was as beautiful as she was good, and as good as she was beautiful, which is saying a great deal in both respects.

Her first skipper was Captain Perrett, one of the very few examples in real life of the "jolly, rollicking sailor" of popular fancy, as full of larks and high spirits as a schoolboy. But he was a good captain for all that, and under his command the "Miltiades" soon made a big name for herself. In 1873 she went out to Melbourne in the splendid time of sixty-three days (pilot to pilot), and that in spite of the fact that she had very poor north-east Trades. She also made the best outward passage of the year (seventy-one days) in 1884, the year before Captain Perrett left her.

In 1878 she was for some time in company on the homeward passage with Green's fast little iron Blackwaller "Carlisle Castle." The "Miltiades" left Melbourne on November 16th, and was ninety-seven days to London; off the Horn the "Carlisle Castle" gave her her dust, making a fine passage of between eighty and ninety days.

Captain Harry Ayling, who took her over in 1885, was one of two brothers, Harry and Tom, both well-known commanders in the Australian trade. He was in the "Miltiades" almost to the end of her career under the British flag, and died at sea. Under him she fully maintained her reputation, and from 1886 to 1894 her longest homeward passage was ninety-two days, her best—and the best of the year—being seventy-eight days in Queen Victoria's Jubilee year

She was, on the whole, a very lucky ship ; but she could not be expected to get through so long a career without her share of narrow escapes.

Her first was in 1874, when she ran ashore as a result of missing stays when trying to make Wellington Harbour, but fortunately was got off without sustaining serious damage.

But probably the closest shave she ever had was in the neighbourhood of Cape Horn in, I think, 1887, when she had a very narrow escape of being in collision with ice. It was the very worst kind of Cape Stiff weather—thick and foggy, a strong westerly wind and sea—and the mate had just come on deck when the lookout man, a little Cockney, came tearing along, almost speechless with alarm.

“ Look aht—look aht there ! ” he gasped.

The mate looked, and saw the towering form of a gigantic iceberg looming out of the fog close to the ship. The helm was put over, and the ship had just cleared the danger when out loomed still another berg on the other bow. It seemed impossible that the ship should avoid this second peril ; but she did it. It was one of the most anxious moments of her whole career.

Then there was the time when she encountered a hurricane off Cape Finisterre. The glass had gone down to twenty-eight degrees, and the hurricane increased in violence until it almost assumed the nature of a typhoon. There was no need to furl her sails. They did not wait to be furled. Even those which had already been taken in were ripped clean out of the gaskets by the fury of the storm.

The man at the wheel had only just been taken away, and the wheel lashed, when the heavy iron casing from the wheel was lifted clean into the air by the wind and

whirled away into the sea astern, as if it had been the lid of a cardboard box.

One of the best of the ship's many races with the "Cimba" was in the late 'eighties, when the two ships sailed from Sydney on the same day. The "Miltiades" made a fine run of five and a half days to the Snares, and, passing by the south of New Zealand, caught "Cimba" up at the Antipodes Islands. Thence she maintained her lead all the way up to the Horn, where the "Cimba" went ahead again. "Miltiades" caught her up once more in the South Atlantic, but the two ships then lost sight of each other, arriving in London on the same day.

On another of her homeward passages the "Miltiades" sailed from Sydney on a Sunday in company with Carmichael's famous "Argonaut." The two ships were neck and neck all the way home, but never sighted each other from the day of leaving until they spoke each other at last off the Lizard.

It was in the winter when the docks were frozen over, and there was a bitter easterly gale raging in the Channel. The "Miltiades" just managed to keep going and got into London River; and she had been there a couple of months, and was nearly ready for sea again, when in came the "Argonaut"! She had been weather bound in the Channel all that time.

One day in the Trades—she was bound for Port Pirie with a cargo of coke—the "Miltiades" sighted a ship which had evidently something amiss with her, and as she drew closer it was seen that the stranger was flying her flag upside down, so that it was plain she was in need of assistance.

She was the "Salsette," belonging to J. Shepherd and Co. of London, and her cargo was on fire. She was

heading for the island of Fayal in the Azores, which was the nearest land, but without much hope of making it before the ship's company had to take to the boats. Their anxiety had been increased by the fact that she had among her cargo several barrels of gunpowder stowed amidships, but this had been successfully got out before the fire touched it.

There was no hope of saving the ship, so all her passengers and crew were transferred to the "Miltiades." Nothing remained to be done, but the ship stood by to see the end.

The burning vessel made a wonderful picture, as the flames caught her rigging, and running up it outlined the whole of the fabric of ropes and spars in living fire. She carried a quantity of phosphorus stowed on the midshiphouse by the mainmast, and when the fire reached it the sky and sea for miles round were lit up by its ghastly and unearthly glow. Ships far distant witnessed the strange brilliance in the heavens, noted it in their logs, but were quite unable to account for it.

The doomed ship burned on steadily. One by one her masts collapsed and plunged with a splash and a hiss into the water. At last she was clean burned out, and nothing remained but the shell of what a few hours before had been a proud and stately ship—to float about, a peril to all her sisters, until a gunboat was sent out to find and sink her, nearly a year later.

Captain Ayling died in the 'nineties, and the ship was taken over by Captain Gambell, who had her until she was sold a year or two later.

By this time the sun of the wool clippers was setting as that of the Blackwallers, the Black Ballers, and the a fleet had already set. The "Miltiades," instead

of loading wool as usual, went round to Newcastle, N.S.W., to take in a cargo of coal for Frisco.

Time was when the ship's company of a "first fighter" in the wool trade was wont to look down with a tinge of patronizing contempt upon the less favoured being whose ships loaded coal at Newcastle, little thinking that the time was soon to come when the proud princesses of the sea would be reduced to trudging the seas, humble suppliants for even such menial service.

The "Miltiades" made the round voyage, London to Sydney, Sydney to Newcastle, Newcastle to Frisco, and Frisco home—in the admirable time of ten months and nineteen days, including time spent in port. She was eighty-nine days to Sydney, fifty-nine from Newcastle to Frisco, and from Frisco she made a magnificent passage round the Horn and up to the Line of sixty-eight days. Unfavourable weather from the Line to Queenstown lengthened it out, however, to one hundred and eight days.

It was her last voyage under the flag she had served so long and so well. After discharging her cargo of grain at Runcorn, on the Manchester Ship Canal, she was sold to the Norwegians.

She was a good old ship still. When she was dry-docked at Runcorn prior to her sale, her hull, after thirty-one years of service, was in better condition than that of a seven or eight years' old modern steel barque which was sold at the same time.

She was perhaps not a spectacular performer, though her 1873 passage comes pretty near that standard. But throughout her long career she seldom, indeed never, made a bad passage. She was never hove-to in the Roaring Forties, which is perhaps one reason for the steady excellence of her record.



A brief survey of her principal passages follows.

1873. London, May 5th; Hobson's Bay, July 15th. Thirty-nine days from the Equator, including runs of 305, 310, and 345 miles. Melbourne to London, Nov. 12th to February 16th. Ninety-four days.
1874. London to Wellington. This was the time when she was aground near Wellington, but got off without damage. Melbourne to London. Seventy-seven days.
1875. The Start to Melbourne. Eighty-one days. Melbourne to London. Ninety-five days.
1876. Lizard to Melbourne. Seventy days. (Only one better passage was made this year, and that was by the beautiful clipper "Mermerus," one of the fastest ships in the Australian trade.)
1877. The Start to Melbourne. Seventy-five days. Melbourne to London. Ninety-seven days.
1878. The Start to Melbourne. Seventy-five days. She had a rough time in the Forties, and her captain had his head cut open by being washed off the poop on to the main deck. Melbourne to London. Eighty-nine days.
1879. London to Melbourne. Eighty-eight days. Melbourne to London. Eighty-nine days. This passage, although not specially brilliant in itself, was one of the best of the year. No ship made a passage of less than eighty days. Only two just got home in eighty—the fast Aberdeen clipper "Samuel Plimsoll" and Devitt & Moore's frigate-built Blackwaller "Parramatta," which was eighty days Sydney to Plymouth. Several veterans did well this year. The old composite

"Thyatira" was eighty-two days, and the celebrated "Jerusalem" eighty-four. Most of the cracks were into the nineties.

1880. The Lizard to Melbourne. Seventy-one days. This was one of her best passages, and had it not been for bad weather in the Bay it might have been even better.

Melbourne to the Motherbank. One hundred and six days. One of the slowest passages of her career

1884. Ushant to Melbourne. Seventy-one days. The best run of the year, with the slashing big clipper "Sobraon" and the Glasgow Loch liner "Loch Long" as runners-up.

## CHAPTER VII

### EPILOGUE : DAYS OF SAIL

SO passed away the glory of sail ; and the ships which in Garden Reach, and at the Pagoda Anchorage, and beside the long curve of Circular Quay, had been the pride and the wonder of their age became in less than a quarter of a century no more than a legend and a name. They have all weighed anchor for the last time. The last glimmer of their sails has dipped beneath the remote and vague horizon of yesterday. The last echoes of their last shanty chorus have died away for ever into the silence of eternity.

The last stragglers of those once-splendid fleets lingered a while in the grain fleet of Frisco, or about the nitrate ports of Chile, or sought their lumber and coal wherever such still offered ; and linger yet, a dwindling few, under foreign flags and in a humiliating and unconsidered servitude.

Great days, great days . . . Is it only in the eye of fancy, I wonder, that they seem so fair ; and will a future generation lament the beauty and the romance of Steam as we do that of Sail, and the departure of the funnel from our harbours as we do that of mast and spar ? I think not ; much there was in those old days that was bad, but much that was fine and fair and brave, and the ships that those days knew were such as man shall not see again.

As of the ships, so of the men. . . . They were a race apart—a race such as the future, with its strangely narrowed seas, its shrunken world, will neither need nor breed. No Commodore-Captain of a 50,000-ton liner is so absolute a king as was the skipper of a little 1,000-ton sailing clipper in the days before the cable and the wireless had attached himself and his ship by an invisible cord to the office at London or Liverpool. Nowadays he may be a very great person in some ways ; but his business begins and ends with the navigation of his ship. Modern invention has ended his autocracy, as it has ended most others. And the substitution of the great companies and combines for the old-fashioned type of one-man shipowner has worked to the same end.

Those days seem to have favoured the development of individuals rather than of types, just as our own time seems to be swamping the individual in the mass. I doubt if Dickens could find a Micawber or a Cuttle, a Dick Swiveller or a Marchioness, in the London of to-day. He might not find a Fagin or a Quilp, and that is something to be thankful for ; but it seems to be one of the penalties of our standardized urban civilization that we should lose some of the wealth of oddity and idiosyncrasy which makes even the meanest of Dickens's mean streets so interesting and colourful. Nor do I think the change is entirely to be put down to the absence of the transmuting magic of genius. When Dickens got away from the folk he knew he produced colourless Rose Maylies and Nicholas Nicklebys and Agnes Wickfields. No ! the gospel of the dead level is one of more aspects than one. If individualism be, as many hold, doomed, the world may be a better place, but it will assuredly be a much duller one.

All of which is merely by way of comment on the fact that the sailing ship captain of days gone by was very frequently a "character." Sometimes he was a "tough nut," but he was mostly a man with an individuality strongly marked by nature, which had been rendered still more so by the circumstances of his life.

There was the celebrated "Bully" Martin—"Eric the Red," as he used to be called, by reason of his "ginger" colouring—an irascible, noisy, rather blustering man who had really done very little to deserve his prefix. A magnificent seaman was Bully Martin, who handled his big, ticklish Lochs and Bens with characteristic daring and dash. Disliking passengers, they may well have disliked him! He was a tremendous driver of his ships, and there was no dancing on the poop in the Forties in an iron ship as in a Donald Mackay emigrant clipper. Had it been—as it was not—Bully Martin, who was the author of the "Hell-or-Melbourne" saying, his passengers might well have thought themselves bound for the first rather than the last named destination.

Then there was that well-known character who commanded the "Nemesis" (that was not really her name). He was part owner of the ship, and naturally took an exceedingly lively interest in her welfare. He used to pay frequent surprise visits to her when she was in dock, which generally ended in his kicking the shipkeeper down the gangway for some real or imagined dereliction of duty. He changed his stevedores two or three times a week if he was in the mood, and once took off his coat on the dockside to have a stand-up fight with the master-stevedore.

When he lay a-dying on board his ship, he ordered "Sails" to bring for his inspection the bolt of canvas



in which he was to be wrapped for his last voyage to Davy Jones.

"Too good—too good!" he exclaimed, with a flash of vitality. "I can't have good canvas wasted like that! Find a rotten piece, I tell you—find a rotten piece! What are you going to weight it down with?"

"A few links of chain cable, sir," replied the sail-maker, much moved.

"Chain cable—chain cable! More waste—I won't hear of it! Holystones, I tell ye, or, by the great hook block, I'll haunt ye!" . . .

Old Captain Z——, again—he was called Farmer Z——, because he affected a sort of agricultural, John Bullish rig, and is said to have even worn leather leggings at sea. He had a wife who was a bit of a navigator, and used to lend him a hand now and again in that way; and on one occasion there was a terrible to-do because the man at the wheel told the mate that "Mrs. Z—— had altered the course." . . .

The ships are gone, most of them, and the men with them. . . . I think sometimes, searching through the scrappy records of their past, of a wreck I saw once on the coast of Cornwall. The ship had run on the rocks all standing a year or so before; and month by month, day by day, the seas had worked their will on her till there remained only a stump of a mast, the pathetic remnant of her bow, protruding from the devouring sea. . . . Even so do the crumbling memories of vanished ships pass inexorably away, only a few poor spars of memory, a few fragments of wreckage, being left by the beating tides of Oblivion on the rocky coast of Time.

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